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Jr. and Sr. High At-Risk Students within Poverty: Formation of the Mentor-Mentee Program in Addressing Their Needs

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**The Title: Jr. and Sr. High At-Risk Students within Poverty: Formation of the
Mentor-Mentee Program in Addressing Their Needs.**

BY

REV. JOHN J. NOGGLE

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REV. JOHN J. NOGGLE

INTRODUCTION:

In the Spring of 2015, I was driving toward Southwest Arkansas to my new appointment at Stamps First United Methodist Church. As I was driving further south on Highway 71, I began to notice how poverty-stricken South Arkansas was. Towns that were once the commercial service centers to their communities contained empty store buildings and little economic life. It was then that I knew that the majority of children in South Arkansas were At-Risk children in poverty. I felt a call in my Spirit to help those in need by developing a plan of action to help them in meeting their conditions of life, while at the same time coming up with a program to help teach them how to get out of poverty and become all God created them to be.

I propose that my project examine how the Church today can become more active within the community through evangelism by outreach in the mission field. This Mentor/Mentee program will teach and work with the faith community in ways that will not violate the United States' civil laws or negatively impact those that might be offended or hurt by the Church in the past. Using my former experiences working in public education as a teacher and coach, I will implement a Mentor/Mentee program that I developed and used in my previous charges in relationship with Public Schools. I had great success in bringing the schools, community, and the Church together

in a partnership where learning and relationships continue to be built and nurtured. I will do this by looking at the history of Stamps, Arkansas, Lafayette County, and the surrounding area within the School District. While looking at the community's history, I will also look at its culture and context of the Stamps and Lafayette County. I will then give a description of the Mentor/Mentee Program and the problem that I have identified with At-Risk children. From my identification of children's poverty issues, I will state my central theological position concerning relationship building. Relationship building will be based on the relationship with God and with others in the community. From these relationships, I will discuss the role of the mission and ministry of the Church. In this role, I will begin to understand Elders and Licensed Pastors' responsibilities and duties as an outreach ministry to others as Mentors.

In this paper, I will also discuss the development of the Mentor/Mentee Program. I will do this by looking at who to invite to be a part of the program. I will also look at questions one should ask those involved and how to go about implementing the program. During the discussion and training of those involved in the program, I will define terms and goals for learning during the meetings. These terms will consist of defining poverty, both generational and situational. It will also bring in definitions of Generation Y and Z. The discussion will include the explanation of the policies and procedures for the school, mentors, and students. During the description of the policies and procedures, all individuals will have an understanding of reporting, proper behavior, and authority within the program. I will include an example of these policies and procedures for examination.

During this project, I will include my observations that I have taken from the meetings that occurred and the responses I have received from those involved. I will provide comments on the interaction and discussion between the students, mentors, school administration, and church

members. The observations gathered from the discussions will give insight into an overall view of the learning, communication, and relationship building during the program's duration.

Finally, I will bring a thought of the conclusion to the program. Through my observations and research, I will determine if the program is a success or a failure. I will also review what was great about the experience and what we might have done differently to make it work better. I will discuss a possible future outlook on what will occur in the lives of the students, mentors, school, community, and Stamps First United Methodist Church. I will also leave some personal thoughts from my experience during the program. I will state how its development and conclusion affected me and how it will affect my future ministries. I will close with some of the program forms we developed during the project. These forms may help those in mission ministry and those wanting to help others in need.

My goal is that this Mentor/Mentee program will help students, adults, and teachers at Lafayette County Public Schools and bring those in our Church and the community a better place to live and work. Through the project, Stamps First United Methodist Church and I will work within the Lafayette County School District to set up the Mentor/Mentee program. The program will be a form of outreach that will involve the local school system, business, and government. The involvement of these groups is to increase the participation of those who might not be in Church with active parts of a faith community.

I hope that others can use the Mentor/Mentee program in their context of church ministry, culture, and within public and private educational systems to help children at risk in poverty situations not just in the United States but around the world. In this hope, as a missional outreach to At-risk children in poverty, this program can bring hope to those with little or no

poverty. Also, to build and nurture relationships within the community. And finally, to help what is called Generation Z, our future, our children of today.

This hope and heart for missional outreach to At-risk children in poverty comes from the example of my parents John E. and Judy J. Noggle. Both grew up in poverty, but with the help of Almighty God, hard work, and those around them that built them up, they were able to rise out of poverty and help those in need, especially children. Now, my inspiration to help comes from my wife, Penny L. Noggle, who also has come from an At-risk childhood in poverty. Penny has risen to become a professional in the Health Care Industry. Penny is respected within the community in which she is a part of here in Stamps. She is also looked up to by others in her Christian faith as she helps others become all God has for them in their lives. In memory of my mother and honor to my wife and family, I write this Mentor/Mentee program so that other children who grow up as At-risk children in poverty can become all God has created them to be and help build a better world for us all.

CHAPTER 1:

1 John 1 New King James Version (NKJV)

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

History of Stamps and Lafayette County Arkansas

In the recent past, the city of Stamps' was a booming community and was the headquarters of major timber industry companies, textile, and manufacturing plants. It was once the headquarters of the Louisiana and Arkansas railways in Southwest Arkansas. William Buchanan started the Louisiana and Arkansas railways in 1898 to take over the railroad routes that connected the logging industry throughout Arkansas and Louisiana. William Buchanan, William Edenborn, and Harvey C. Couch operated the Louisiana and Arkansas railways and Bodcaw Lumber companies in Stamps. Both companies had their headquarters in Stamps until the late 1920s. Over time the Bodcaw Lumber Company became the largest lumber company in the world. Some of the railway employees consisted of timbermen who had worked for the Bodcaw Lumber Company. It closed after World War One due to no more timber to cut and used for the war effort. The railway covered the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. It connected the cities of Hope, Arkansas, to New Orleans, Louisiana, and ran from Natchez, Mississippi, to Dallas, Texas. The Louisiana and Arkansas railway did not just move timber; the Louisiana and Arkansas railway

passenger cars transported people traveling across the three states. The Louisiana and Arkansas Railway Company were purchased by the Kansas City Southern railways during the 1950s and 1960s. The Kansas City Southern railway ended all the passenger train service in 1969. In 1992, it would dissolve the subsidiary lines of the former Louisiana and Arkansas railways while keeping the major components of the rail system's mainlines.

Over the last 25 years, all the major industries have left the community, which has caused Stamps to fall into an economic hard time. The chief source of employment for Stamps and all of Lafayette county was Allen White Furniture Company, which was established in 1955 and went out of business in 2007. According to Gary Evans' article in the magazine *Furniture Today*, the company leadership sent out a statement that read, "the closing was due to chronic and overwhelming industry pressures. The release gave no details, but sources said that flat business, the closing of Atlanta-based retailer Rhodes, and loss of sales due to Federated and May department stores' consolidation contributed to the shutdown. The management team and ownership have worked hard to avoid this last option and are deeply grateful for the loyalty shown by our employees, suppliers, and lenders. They have continued to take care of the needs of our customers while knowing about the struggles facing the company".¹ The Allen White company employed over 400 employees in the area and was a chief source of tax and sales revenue for Stamps and Lafayette county. Even though the company was sold and moved to Canada, it did leave an office with two employees in Stamps to handle the logistical transportation of its furniture products. With the closing of the Allen White Furniture Company, the community and people have never recovered from the economic downturn, leading to higher

¹ Gary, Evans. "Alan White closing: Upholstery maker will liquidate." *Furniture Today*, February 5, 2007. p. 5.

poverty in the County. The economic downturn and more significant community poverty struggles were also affected by the United States Great Recession, which started in 2007 and lasted until 2009. From the Federal Reserve, we have an essay quote by Robert Rich, "the Great Recession began in December of 2007 and ended in June 2009, which makes it the longest recession since World War II. Beyond its duration, the Great Recession was notably severe in several respects. Real gross domestic product (GDP) fell 4.3 percent from its peak in 2007Q4 to its trough in 2009Q2, the largest decline in the postwar era (based on date as of October 2013). The unemployment rate, which was 5 percent in December 2007, rose to 9.5 percent in June 2009 and peaked at 10 percent in 2009. As of this writing in 2013, however, real GDP is little over 4.5 percent above its previous peak, and the unemployment rate remains at 7.3 percent".²

Cultural and context:

In my new appointment at Stamps First United Methodist Church, the community's cultural context is of a rural town in Lafayette County, Arkansas. The population of Stamps following the 2000 census is 2131. There are currently 830 households in the Stamps community, and it has a racial makeup within the city of 44.30% Caucasian, 54.48% African American, .52% Native American .61% Hispanic, .14% Asian or Pacific Rim.

Stamps' population consists of 30.7% of the 830 households having children under the age of 18, with 37.8% of those households having married couples living under the same roof. 21.7% of the homes currently have a female with no husband present, while 34.7% were non-families, and 17.6% had households with a single occupant in them who were 65 years or older. 31.7% of all households currently have at least one individual, according to the 2000 census. The average

² Robert Rich, "Great Recession." Federal Reserve History, November 22, 2013.

family home size is 3.10, with an average household size of 2.46 people per dwelling. The median age of the population of Stamps is 37 years old. Of the community, 19.5% of the people are over 65 years old, and 27.1% are under 18. The remainder of the population, ages 19-64, 53.4%, are those in the community currently living in the city limits.

The median income per household is \$22,194, with a median family income of \$26,591. This economic downfall has the average per capita income for the community is \$11,440. This amount makes over half of the city of Stamps population living below the poverty line at 50.8%.

After the State Board of Education and lawmakers forced all of Arkansas to consolidate in the early 2000s, Stamps Public Schools merged with all the other schools in Lafayette County to form the Lafayette County School District. There are now two schools in the district, with the Elementary School located in Lewisville just six miles outside Stamps and the High School located in Stamps. Due to the high rate of per capita poverty and lack of primary industry within Stamps and Lafayette County, there is a low graduation rate. The graduation rate of Lafayette County Public School System is at the bottom of Arkansas Schools with a graduation rate in 2009-2010 of 82.1%, 2010-2011 of 88.3%, and 2011-2012 of 87.93%.

The National Center for Education Statistics gives in its 2012-2013 review on statistics of the Lafayette County School District that it had 721 total students in the district with 326 in grades 7-12 and 395 k-6. There are currently 64 teachers in the school district with a student/teacher ratio of 11 students per teacher in each classroom. In the Lafayette County School District, there are 57 students with an **Individualized Education Program**. An Individualized Education Program or IEP is a document whereby a child with a disability has set objectives and goals to

help in the child's educational process of learning. An IEP helps the school and all those who are a part of the child's academic growth maintain a balanced and practical education program.

Because Lafayette County and Stamps are at a high poverty level of single and family income, 215 high school students are eligible for the free lunch program. Another 39 qualified for the reduced-priced lunches. The enrollment by gender within the Lafayette County Junior and Senior High School District has a ratio of 154 female students to 172 male students. The Junior High and Senior High schools have 33.37 teachers with a student-to-teacher ratio of 9.77 per class.

The Lafayette County School District Elementary School has 395 students, of which 205 are male students, and 190 are female. In the Lafayette County Elementary School, there are 30 teachers on staff with a 13.17 student-to-teacher ratio per class. Out of those 395 students enrolled in the Lafayette County Elementary School, 291 are eligible for the free lunch program, and 44 are available for reduced-price lunches.

These figures illustrate how economic poverty comes into play in dealing with the children and their families within the Stamps community area. Studies have shown that it has an overt influence on low education and graduation rates within those communities because of high poverty levels. Lafayette County Elementary is currently a Title I School and has a Title I School-wide Program. The Lafayette County Junior High and Senior High School also are a Title I School and has a Title I School-Wide Program. According to the State of Arkansas, a Title I Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended, provides financial assistance through State Educational Agencies (SEAs) to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high percentage or numbers of children from poverty or low-income families. The financial assistance is to help ensure that all children meet challenging state

academic and achievement standards. Because both the Elementary and High schools having Title I programs in their schools due to the high percentage of low-income families being within the community, over 40 percent. The Title I definition requires the Lafayette County School District to use Title I, federal, state, and local funds to operate a "school-wide program" to upgrade the instructional program for the whole school. Lafayette County Public Schools' extensive and targeted assistance programs must be based on effective means of improving student achievement and include strategies to support parental involvement.

Description of the Mentor/Mentee Program and Problem:

The problem I am addressing in the practicum is to develop a Mentor/Mentee Program that provides a rational mission work between Stamps First United Methodist Church and the Lafayette County Junior High and Senior High School. The Mentor/Mentee Program will address At-Risk Students' needs in poverty within the Junior and Senior High School. The Public-School system is the primary building block within the United States, where children form their opinions and develop their identities. I will be focusing on the need for a Mentor/Mentee Program to help our students, faculty, and mentors. The program's focus is to bring about the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the form of missional work to help them in their learning and positive decision-making skills to help break the chains of poverty and At-Risk situations in their lives. The program will help develop a relationship with those in the community who are professionals and At-Risk Students. They will be able to focus on developing and setting goals for their lives and achieving said goals and objectives. They will also learn and how to apply those middle-class rules in society, both known and unknown.

My Central Theological Position:

The central Theological position that is the driving force of my ministry is that **God wants a relationship with us, and we are to help those in need, especially children.** This thought comes from 1 John 3:16-18 "¹⁶this is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." (NIV). And when it comes with relationship to children and their needs, I look at what Jesus said in Matthew's Gospel chapter 18, starting with verse one, "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ²He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." Jesus' ministry shows us the love he had for children and how all people should treat others with respect and dignity, especially children.

1. God wants a relationship with us (humankind).

At the beginning of creation, God created humankind to have a relationship that set them apart from those of the angels and those of the creatures that were on the earth. God thought about what this creation of humankind should be in the Universe. God showed how humanity should be set apart from all others on the planet. God decided to create humanity in God's image to have a relationship with our Creator. Within Genesis, the first chapter, God says, "²⁶Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along

the ground.²⁷ So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them". (NIV)

We find a God that walks and talks with Adam and Eve as they share a life, one with each other and one with their Creator. We see this as a family bond or relationship between parents and children. This relationship was based on love and caring for the things of creation that God had made and called good. This parent and child relationship is through both the Old and New Testaments. In Genesis chapter 18 verse 17, we see God as a friend to humankind when God calls Abraham a friend. "¹⁷ And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham [**My friend** and servant] what I am going to do,". (NIV) These words from Genesis let us know that God cares for us not just as our Creator but as one would for a close friend. Even when God was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah's cities and those of the valley, God was willing to talk to Abraham and listen to him. This relationship allowed Abraham to fight for the lives of his family and those of the cities. As Scripture states, if only ten righteous could be found within the cities, God would not destroy them. A personal relationship between God and Abraham in the Biblical text illustrates that God does care for lives within all creation. Even when evil is present, God is willing to work on behalf of those trying to do good for others.

This friendship continues between God and the descendants of Abraham today. God continues to move in their lives even when they do not move in their lives with God. We see this in the book of Isaiah, chapter 41, as the prophet Isaiah tells the people that God still cares for them and still loves them when he states, "but you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham, my friend, ⁹" I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you.¹⁰ So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will

strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand". (NIV) We see here that God loves us even when we don't love God. It also lets us know that God never leaves us nor forsakes us, gives us the strength to overcome, and helps us in our time of need by those who help others for the Kingdom of God and love for God's children.

2. We do this by having a relationship with each other, given by the example of Jesus' teaching ministry of outreach.

When we focus on God's relationship by the example of Jesus's teachings, we see in the Gospels a ministry of outreach to all. Jesus went to the least, the last, and the lost to meet them where they were. Even when those of the religious elite questioned him about his ministry, Jesus told them that he only does those things he sees his Father doing. When asked about the Greatest Commandment, Jesus gave the scribe an answer that everyone could see that all the laws boil down to two simple things: love God and love each other. Jesus did this so we would know how to relate to God and Humankind without getting caught up in discussion over details like humans usually do. From the Gospel of Mark, the 12th chapter, we read this, "²⁸ One of the teachers of the Law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" ²⁹ "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." ³² "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are

not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on, no one dared ask him any more questions." (NIV) When we do these two things, we build a relationship that can withstand all elements and bring about cooperation beyond everyday life.

One of the most important figures that took this relationship to heart in the 20th century was Princess Diana. She was known for her help with those in need around the world. Princess Diana brought public attention to those that were the least, the last, and the lost. She stated in an article of *Readers Digest* that our actions toward each other should be to "carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward, safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you."³ We show love for others through our actions, not just our words. These actions of love were at the core and examples of Jesus' teaching and ministry.

When the time came for Jesus to die, he told those disciples and followers that they would continue to do the ministry's work to all of God's children, Jew and Gentile. Jesus also said that they would do these works of the Churches' ministry to others even more significantly than he had done while on this earth.

The Mission of the Church:

The stated Mission of the Stamps First United Methodist Church, as outlined by the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, is one that is to "Bring everyone into a relationship with God and one another by meeting the needs of our neighbors and community." We find this example in the Scriptures found in Matthew 22:34-40, where Jesus is asked what is the "Greatest Commandment" by those of religious authority. The Gospel states, "³⁴Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.³⁵ One of them, an expert in the Law, tested

³ NICOLE FORNABAIO/RD.COM, MSSA/SHUTTERSTOCK

him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? ³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (NIV)

Stamps First United Methodist Church looks at how we can be useful in Mission and Ministry. In doing this, we must see our neighbors and community's needs because of Christ's call to treat those like we would want others to treat us. By treating others as Scripture teaches us, we hope to be in a relationship with each other. By following the Greatest Command, it then starts making us one in relationship with God in a communion of family fellowship. Because of extreme poverty, we have to seek them out actively.

In addition to the overall Mission Statement of the United Methodist Church found in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, in paragraph 120, "the mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs".⁴ The mission and ministry of the Church are to reach out beyond the walls of the Church building. The Church is to help all people to know the Love of God. A love exemplifies this relationship for all our neighbors in our community. This action of love is not just saying we wish we could help, but all of this is to demonstrate the example that he left with us by Word and his ministry that we are to help the least, last and the lost. This action of love also brings us back to our United Methodist roots of John Wesley's example by taking the Church outside the door and meeting the needs of those around us to become all they can concerning one another and especially relationship with

⁴ Judith E. Smith Executive Editor, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, (The United Methodist Publishing House: Nashville, 2012), p.87.

Almighty God. When we look at this from the mission of Stamps First United Methodist Church, we see the rationale to help those in the community, especially the children, to give them a relationship with us as the Church and with God by our example of action for them to help them with their needs. This relationship brings the community in fellowship with God and the Church. When we take this idea of mission, we relate it to the rationale of mission in ministry given us by *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*.

In Paragraph ¶ 121. ***The rationale for Our Mission-*** "The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God's grace and by exemplifying Jesus' command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world. The fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world is the vision Scripture holds before us. The United Methodist Church affirms that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the Lord of all. As we make disciples, we respect persons of all religious faiths, and we defend religious freedom for all persons. Jesus' words in Matthew provide the Church with our mission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (28:19-20), and "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . And you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (22:37, 39)."⁵ In this, we see how we, as the Church, should visit our role in the mission and why. When we try to decide our role in mission ministry, we should ask why we are doing outreach ministry and what outcome we hope to have. These guidelines give us a framework to use as a model to know why we are in ministry and to keep us

⁵ Judith E. Smith Executive Editor, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, (The United Methodist Publishing House: Nashville, 2012), p.87.

on task, keeping the goal before us as we do ministry. As with the United Methodist Church, we use *The Book of Discipline* as a guideline and organizational tool in ministry. Useful guideline frameworks help keep individuals and groups on task and understand the focus and should be in ministry objectives.

Ministry of the Church:

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church states in Paragraph 102 in the Mission and Service that "we insist that personal salvation always involves Christian Mission and Service to the world. By joining hearts and hands, we assert that personal religion, evangelical witness, and Christian social action are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing".⁶ In looking at our calling in ministry, we see the words that Jesus said, which sometimes we do not see in the whole as one giving one's life for a friend. Jesus said in the Gospel of John of relationship and action, "¹² my command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other". (NIV) As we look at these words and the life of Christ, Jesus gives us the perfect model of ministry. What Christ's words and ministry demonstrate is that we

⁶ Judith E. Smith Executive Editor, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, (The United Methodist Publishing House: Nashville, 2012), p. 221.

provide all that we are to others. Christ also teaches us to show the love of God and build that relationship of reconciliation with those in our community.

When we examine the ministry of mission in the Church, we should look at the ministry's methodology and how we go about it. From our traditions within *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, we have spelled out our direction to carry on the Church's ministry.

In *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, paragraph ¶ 122. ***The Process for Carrying Out Our Mission***-We make disciples as we:

- Proclaim the Gospel, seek, welcome, and gather persons into the body of Christ;
- Lead persons to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and the Spirit and profession of faith in Jesus Christ;
- Nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace, such as Wesley's Christian conferencing;
- Send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate, caring presence, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the Gospel; and
- Continue the mission of seeking, welcoming, and gathering persons into the community of the body of Christ.⁷

⁷ Judith E. Smith Executive Editor, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, (The United Methodist Publishing House: Nashville, 2012), p.87-88.

By our actions of faith and service, these are the things that we hope to see bloom to bear fruit in our calling of ministry to the world as we reach out to those children and families in the Stamps community.

As Clergy, we have the ministry role that we should look at when defining our task and examining why we do things in our walk-in ministry. For those in the United Methodist Church, we are given to this by our responsibilities to those we serve. These are outlined in paragraphs ¶

340. Responsibilities and Duties of Elders and Licensed Pastors-

1. The responsibilities of elders are derived from the authority given in ordination. Elders have a fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service and thus serve in the local Church and in extension ministries in witness and service of Christ's love and justice. Elders are authorized to preach and teach the Word, provide pastoral care and counsel, administer the sacraments, and order the Church's life for service in mission and ministry as pastors, superintendents, and bishops.

2. Licensed pastors share with the elders the responsibilities and duties of a pastor for this fourfold ministry within the context of their appointment.⁸

When we process why we do ministry and the outcomes we hope to see in service, we are to embody the teachings of Jesus as a servant. Clergy are to give dynamic leadership in ordering the Church. The clergy is to help people in the development of being a disciple to the world. The clergy is also to build the body of Christ to extend the ministry of Christ to those around us

⁸ Judith E. Smith Executive Editor, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, (The United Methodist Publishing House: Nashville, 2012), p.252.

in a caring, giving way. The clergy is to engage those to become one with the community in labor and love.

As far as the Church's Laity, we look at how the Church's creation comes into being in helping with poverty. In the early history and ministries of the Christian Church, we see the early leaders and Apostles' examples when they gave all of their positions to help the community of faith, especially those that were widows, orphans, and the poor. The Book of Acts Chapter 4 verses 32-35 shows us this example as it states, "³²Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. ³³And with great power, the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. ³⁴Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need". (NIV) From the early days of the Church, we have had a mind and Spirit for missions. The early Church saw to the needs of those within their community. With the Holy Spirit's help, the early Church shared in the faithful witness of the Gospel.

For those of the Stamps First United Methodist Church, they take to heart the United Methodist Churches' motto "opens minds, open hearts, open doors." With this thought in mind of helping those in need, Stamps First United Methodist Church tries to become ecumenical with other denominations within the City of Stamps and those of the African-American community. For it has been the Church, both past and present, that is willing to reach out and help those in need, especially those At-Risk Children in poverty. "Globally, Christian churches are increasingly engaged as partners for health promotion work, particularly with disadvantaged populations.

Many churches explicitly include health as part of their mission or ministry, or implicitly through values of social justice and empowerment (Sutherland et al. 1995; Campbell et al. 2007) and have a long history of working closely with communities considered 'hard to reach,' such as the elderly, young people and disadvantaged populations (Whitelaw et al. 2001; Peterson et al. 2002; Reinert et al. 2008). In particular, the Church in the United States has been involved in addressing the health needs of underserved populations and narrowing the health inequities observed between the African-American community and other ethnic and racial groups (Sutherland et al. 1995; Gee et al. 2005). Church-affiliated organizations (termed faith-based organizations in the United States) have also played vital roles in caring for the poor, providing social support, job training, housing, education, food, and spiritual support, contributing to the health and wellbeing of communities in the United States (National Center for Cultural Competence 2001)".⁹

This outreach ministry within the community of faith brings about the physical and spiritual knowledge of Missional Development and Vision. Doing so helps to keep Laity focused on those in need and help in their learning and development to become productive in society and the community of faith. Chris Folsmbee writes in his book, *Gladhearted Disciples*, "Gladhearted disciples know their place, path, and purpose.¹ *Practicing Witness: A Missional Vision of Christian Practices* by Benjamin Conner is a great little book full of extraordinary wisdom. One of the most helpful articulations of witness in Conner's book was his thoughtful expression of how ministry with adolescents involves helping them discover their place, path, and purpose. Their place is the social world, their path is how they integrate with their social world, and their

⁹ Marcia K. Campbell, *Church-Based Health Promotion Interventions: Evidence and Lessons Learned*, *Annual Review of Public Health*, Vol. 28, April 2007, p. 213-14.

purpose is their ongoing identity development within their place and down their path".¹⁰

Christians that understand and have a purpose to their faith and mission in the Kingdom of God can make great strides in sharing the Gospel by their faith in action to others. People in need will see God in them and know that there is a God and Savior who loves and cares for everyone as he did to those who are helping them now. I believe that this is how we are to go about in the missional field to help those in need and, in turn, help those At-Risk Children in poverty.

¹⁰ Chris Folmsbee, *Gladhearted Disciples*. (Nashville, Abingdon Press, Kindle Edition (Kindle Locations 1302-1303)).

CHAPTER 2:

Isaiah 1: 18-20 NKJV

¹⁸ "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.

¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; ²⁰ But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MENTOR/MENTEE PROGRAM

1. VISIT WITH THE SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND ADMINISTRATION TO ASK TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS A. WHAT DO YOU NEED TO HELP AT-RISK KIDS?
B. HOW CAN WE HELP?

Within the project's parameters, we must identify At-Risk children in poverty conditions within the public-school system. The Lafayette County Public School System has an abundance of candidates that meet this requirement for the project. According to the definition of the United States Government of what qualifies for an At-Risk child, we see that in the past few years,

research on the well-being of the population has expanded to include the concept of at-risk conditions. Generally, these characteristics of the individual or situations of At-Risk children can be caused by the context they are a part. These characteristics are believed to create higher outcomes of undesirable life for individuals and families. Examples of these might include completing high school, curb premarital births, or impacting the overall quality of life.

Within this At-Risk Children project, I estimate the frequency of three personal and three familial at-risk conditions in poverty for the school-age population in the United States. The specific requirements are the presence of a disability, ever retained in school, and speaking English less than very well. The familial conditions are either or both parents absent from the household. They generally come from low family income and one or both parents being employed. For each of these conditions described above, the At-Risk-Children project estimates individuals' levels of occurrence for the total school-age population dealing with categories for age, race, and sex groups.

Many churches and denominations have problems working with public schools because they misinterpreted The Law of Separation of Church and state. Over the last few decades, the State and Federal Supreme Courts, along with Federal and State Laws, have upheld church involvement in helping public schools and their students. James E Wood Jr. wrote in his article, *Equal Access: A New Direction in American Public Education Editorial in Journal of Church and State*, "the Equal Access Act applies to any public secondary school that receives "Federal financial assistance," and that permits any "noncurricular related student groups" to meet on school premises during "non-instructional time." The act's provisions substantially increase federal control over all public secondary schools that meet these two conditions. The legislation's effect is to remove all local control over those ideological groups meeting in public

secondary schools. The phrase "Federal financial assistance" is nowhere defined in the legislation or its legislative history. The phrase "non-curriculum-related student groups" is also undefined. Simultaneously, "non-instructional time" is defined to mean "time set aside by the school before actual classroom instruction begins or after actual classroom instructions end."¹¹

2. WORK WITH THE COUNSELORS TO IDENTIFY 10 TO 20 AT-RISK KIDS (5-10 MALE AND 5-10 FEMALES IF AVAILABLE), 7TH THROUGH 9TH GRADE FOR THIS PROJECT.

Once we have built a working relationship with those in the Public School, both the Administration and Counselors, we will identify 10 to 20 students that fit the criteria of being At-Risk children, five to ten male, and five to ten female students. We will be working with those of grades 7 through 9. According to research, this age is the time of most significant growth of identity of one's life. This age period is the time in which transitions of mind, body, and character happen between ages 12-16, and we see youth changes from thoughts of childhood to views affecting their adult life. In this adolescence period, we see a transition between the beginning of puberty and adulthood, during which the youth will go through significant physical, mental, emotional, and social changes. What we learn through this age period of At-Risk children is "in recent decades, a growing number of low-income and less educated white and Hispanic couples have joined African Americans informing families before they are economically independent. Thus, the traditional ordering of school, employment,

¹¹ James E Wood Jr., Equal Access: A New Direction in American Public Education Editorial, Journal of Church and State vol. 27 1985 p. 10.

home-leaving, and family formation has broken down for an ever-larger share of youth growing up in less than advantaged circumstances."¹²

3. FOR THE COURSE OF THIS PROJECT WE WILL INVITE FIVE MALE AND FIVE FEMALE ADULTS WHO WILL BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL TO THEIR ASSIGNED STUDENTS AND HAVE PASSED A FEDERAL BACKGROUND CHECK.

This project will reach out to five male and five female adults within our community who will be positive role models for the students under their assignment as mentors. These mentors will help build a positive relationship with those students to help them set goals and learn how to overcome poverty and become productive citizens within society. According to the text, *BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, the authors state that mentoring models such as this project can "promote mentoring " building relationships that can enhance the success for both parties. Mentoring of individuals can be an informal or a formal process. Mentoring can take place in short, casual segments or can be as structured and involved as deemed appropriate by both partners".¹³ These segments are of the importance of developing these relationships between the students and adults, so it will be a smooth process where learning and listening can occur.

4. DEVELOP A WORKING MODEL TO TRAIN YOUR MENTORS IN HOW TO WORK WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS. A. BACKGROUND CHECK FOR THE MENTORS. B. TRAINING WITH COUNSELORS ON AT-RISK CHILDREN. C. DISCUSSION ON

¹² Frank F. Furstenberg Jr. On a New Schedule: Transitions to Adulthood and Family Change. The Future of Children. Vol. 20. NO. 1. SPRING 2010 p.76.

¹³ Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., Philip E. DeVol, Terie Dreussi Smith, "*BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, (United States, 2001), p. 86-87.

POVERTY; DEFINITION, WHERE DOES IT OCCUR (ALL RACES AND NATIONS), THE DIFFERENCE IN GENERATIONAL AND SITUATIONAL POVERTY, SOCIAL RULES (HIDDEN AND OPEN). MOST RULES FOR SUCCESS HAVE THEIR CENTER BASED ON MIDDLE-CLASS RULES, TEACH HOW TO SET GOALS, EXPECTATIONS, AND PROVIDE POSITIVE SUPPORT, HOW TO BREAK FROM RELATIONSHIPS THAT CAN HINDER GROWTH AND MAKING GOOD CHOICES.

In this part, we will work on training the mentors in a two-hour session. The training will consist of understanding the students, developing a relationship, and instructing them to set objectives. The development of this involvement is to establish goals and sub-goals to obtain the students' aspirations. It is also to help them understand middle-class rules (hidden and open). The outcome of these interactions and teaching is to develop in the students a positive outlook on life. It will also help them to work with individuals that can help in their process of completing their objectives in their everyday life. As discussed in the text, *BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, we will observe that formal or structured mentoring with the students will help develop trusting and lasting confidence between the students and adults. "A formal mentoring usually involves setting regular mentor meetings that include goal-setting, assignments (reading, written, experiential), and some form of reporting."¹⁴ During the school year, the mentors will keep notes of their meetings with their assigned students. These notes will allow them to make observations of their involvement with the students and their learning behaviors and life.

¹⁴ Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., Philip E. DeVol, Terie Dreussi Smith, "*BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, (United States, 2001), p. 87.

5. SET UP A CONTROLLED/SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR BOTH MENTOR AND MENTEE: I.E., SCHOOL, AND CHURCH UNDER SUPERVISION BY PASTOR, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATION.

The two most important parts of this project are developing a relationship between the mentors and mentees so they can learn the skills and rules to get out of poverty. The other is creating a controlled and safe environment so the knowledge can take place. The best way to do this is when the students are in school and are under constant supervision and observation of the school authorities and project monitor. Again, it is where most churches and community leaders feel they might run into a problem with those that insist on the separation of Church and state or the community and public education. In my research, I have discovered that even though some rules and laws dictate when you can have a meeting with students during public school time of learning, as long as that time is deemed instructional, so to meet with the students. These laws help to provide assistance to public schools and maintain the right of free speech and religion within the United States by government authority and rule. In the article, Ellis M. West wrote "The Supreme Court and Religious Liberty in the Public Schools," in the Journal of Church and State that the "government may do so on its own, or it may be required to do so by the courts. In either case, the Supreme Court considers the primary purpose and effect of the government's action to be the protection of religious liberty and the aiding of religion, and thus the principle of benevolent neutrality is not violated".¹⁵

6. INTRODUCTION OF THE MENTORS TO THE MENTEES

¹⁵ Ellis M. West, "The Supreme Court and Religious Liberty in the Public Schools", Journal of Church and State vol. 25 1983 p. 101.

Once the mentors' background check and training are complete, those who have volunteered for the program and have the school administration's approval can begin introducing the students to their mentors in a group setting. The presentation will allow them to get to know each other and ask questions about the program they might have or have not answered during the meeting processes. The introduction period is the key in starting the relationship building, communication, and trust, which the mentors and mentees will develop during the school year. What should take place is God's work in the mission to bring communication and relationship with adults and students. The correct way to look at what Christian Mission means is to see it in its pure form, and God sends the Church and people out to do mission. Dr. Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi wrote in his text, *Mission: An Essential Guide*, "that God initiates all missionary activity, and that God as a missionary God, participates with those whom God sends."¹⁶ Kindle loc. 103. What we should be looking at is God. We should understand that God is a God of a mission, and thus the people of God should have a mission to be involved within the Kingdom of God and all creation. When we look at the Christian mission, we need to ask who the protagonist in the Christian mission is? Who is the one in action? The answers we should get from these questions should be what God has done. Then what the church or Christian community has to do in developing relationships and meeting the community's needs in which it lives and serves.

7. DEVELOP A WORKING TIME FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES TO MEET ON A REGULAR SCHEDULE.

¹⁶ Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi, *Mission: An Essential Guide*, (Nashville, TN, Abingdon Press, 2003), Kindle loc. 103.

Establishing a time to meet is essential in building trust and helps in the communication process while learning is taking place. Most At-Risk children have uncertainty with everyday life due to generational poverty and single-parent households. This uncertainty occurs when both parents are working to make ends meet. It brings into mind that this is a broken world in which there are no guarantees of order and structure within their daily lives. The idea of a broken world is in the mind of the mentors who have grown up in the community but have found a way to bring order to their lives and achieve their goals in life. Chris Folmsbee wrote about this in his book *Gladhearted Disciples*, that "They understand why the world is a broken place. However, the acceptance of this reality carries with it a greater reality that God is at work in the world to make all things new and that one day God will again dwell with God's people".¹⁷ With God, we see an order of life and a development of one's journey of learning and building relationships to obtain one's goals and become what God has created in each human being in God's image. The authors of the book *BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES* state that having mentees is vital for building trust. "Mentoring relationships can be of equal benefit to both parties. Successful people benefit from sharing their "secrets" with select individuals. Most people need to share their experiences in order to help others".¹⁸ The authors also state that it allows the mentors to take quality notes to understand their mentees during these meeting times. The authors write that "indeed, the mentoring relationship, by its

¹⁷ Chris Folmsbee, Chris. *Gladhearted Disciples* (Kindle Locations 1339-1340). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

¹⁸ Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., Philip E. DeVol, Terie Dreussi Smith, "*BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, (United States, 2001), p. 89.

very nature, offers the mentor time to review and re-evaluate person and career goals and priorities."¹⁹

8. GO OVER THE GROUND RULES AND GOALS FOR THE MENTOR–MENTEE COMMUNICATION AND HOW TO BREAK FROM RELATIONSHIPS THAT CAN HINDER GROWTH AND MAKING GOOD CHOICES.

Having an understanding of the ground rules is essential when we talk about the structure of any program. Being a former high school teacher and coach, I needed to go over my class rules and those for my teams each year. Rules and regulations keep us focused on what we are to do and how we work together to accomplish a task. Rules bring a sense of discipline to the program in both the mentor's and mentees' relationships and communication. Discipline allows individuals to have a guideline for self-governance, which can positively bring about a structure that gives them choices to develop their life skills. In the text of *BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, the authors examine that in poverty situations, "discipline is about penance and forgiveness, not necessarily change."²⁰ In the program, I want the mentors and mentees to feel that through a disciplined structure and learning, the student's life changes can be beneficial to them and not because they are forced to do so, instead because they want to do so.

We also want to establish ground rules for how students can break from relationships that can hinder growth and prevent them from making good choices. We see most in At-Risk children's

¹⁹ Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., Philip E. DeVol, Terie Dreussi Smith, "*BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, (United States, 2001), p. 89.

²⁰ Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., Philip E. DeVol, Terie Dreussi Smith, "*BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, (United States, 2001), p. 105.

lives because they are in a social setting that sometimes can be counter-productive. Counter-productive people can be attributed to family members, neighbors, or neighborhoods where the children live. Those individuals within the child's friends and social elements sometimes like prey on the young. Because of the poverty and crime in these students' neighborhoods, we see a call for the African-American communities of faith to rally to help bring justice and the freedoms they fought so hard for their descendants. Michael W. Waters addresses this point in his book *FREESTYLE*. In the chapter on Justice, he details in a letter to those that fought for Freedom and Justice in the history of the African American peoples, "It remains my sincere hope that we shall one day achieve the greatness for which you, our ancestors, fought and died. Please accept my deepest sympathies on the painful loss of so many of your children, past, and present. We salute your courageous sacrifices for your people and our entire nation".²¹ So we must help these students make good relationships and connections that can promote greater Justice and freedom to choose their future and ensure they can complete their goals and objectives to have a good life.

9. HAVE REGULAR OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION WITH THE MENTOR—
MENTEES TO HELP IMPROVE POSITIVE DECISION MAKING IN THEIR LIVES
DEVELOPED FROM THEIR GOALS AND UNDERSTANDING THE OPEN AND
HIDDEN RULES OF SOCIETY FOCUSING ON THOSE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS.

During our regularly scheduled meeting times with the mentors and mentees, both the program director and mentors will make observations between the mentors and mentees and their

²¹ Michael W. Waters, *Freestyle: Reflections on Faith, Family, Justice, and Pop Culture*, (Nashville, Upper Room, 2014), p. 103.

conversations. During this time of relationship and trust-building, the mentors will work on helping the mentees understand and relate to the open and hidden rules of society, which are based on the life and practices of the middle class. The middle-class rules are essential because it is the prevailing norms accepted in most social experiences. In this program, we are trying to get the mentees to see life and social change as something attainable in their journey. We will be working with mentors with religious ties to churches and communities to promote positive growth on a social and spiritual basis. Emily A. Leventhal and Daniel P Mears write in their article *Will churches respond to the call? Religion, civic responsibility, and social service*, for the Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, "ties to social and political networks have long been established as factors critical to mobilizing community-based initiatives (Kling and Posner, 1990), no less for religious-based efforts (Williams, 1999; Wood, 1994). Indeed, many congregations are embedded within networks of diverse memberships and local and national organizations (Ammerman, 1997). These networks can serve to stimulate, enable, or enhance church-based social service and advocacy efforts. In turn, churches can serve as a vehicle through which other organizations pursue their specific agendas (Williams and Demerath, 1991).

22

DEFINING TERMS AND GOALS FOR LEARNING

Definitions:

According to Webster's Dictionary, the definition of poverty states:

²² Emily A. Leventhal and Daniel P Mears, *Will churches respond to the call? Religion, civic responsibility, and social service*, for the Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, 29.2 (June 2002): p. 57.

POVERTY: 1 a: the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions,

b: renunciation as a member of a religious order of the right as an individual to own property

c: debility due to malnutrition

In all those examples of poverty, we can begin to look at those we have as At-Risk students and see they meet these definitions' requirements. Most will fit in definition 1a, where the lack of wealth and money and material possessions. As a part of the United States Government, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) states that poverty is met when a person has less income needed to purchase basic needs. These needs being food, clothing, shelter, or other essential items for basic everyday living.

In the case of most of our students in the program, we see they come from the African-American community of Lafayette County. We have many churches that try to help in the African-American culture, where there is a rich heritage of helping those in poverty. Studies have shown that "African American communities have a long tradition of human services delivery in the context of religious institutions. Historically, black churches have provided a wide range of resources and opportunities that were inaccessible to African Americans from mainstream institutions (Frazier, 1974; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Nelsen & Nelsen, 1975). Mays and Nicholson's (1933) classic study of black congregations found that churches sponsored a diverse array of community outreach programs, including programs to feed

unemployed people, free health clinics, recreational activities, and child care programs. These activities reflect a longstanding tradition of providing for those in need in their communities".²³

GENERATIONAL POVERTY: "is defined as having been in poverty for at least two generations; however, the patterns begin to surface much sooner than two generations if the family lives with others who are from generational poverty."²⁴ We see with the context of our program generational poverty up to eight generations with some of our students. Generational poverty is a pattern that has not been broken within the close family unit. Like the children of Israel, they wander in the wilderness for forty years, and they cannot break this cycle of poverty within each generation. From the Bible, this passage from Numbers chapter 32 verse 13, "¹³The LORD's anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone". (NIV) Like those mentioned in the Bible, individuals in generational poverty look at this as an obstacle that can not be overcome. They can not see a better life for themselves, so there seems to be no way out or direction on how to get out.

SITUATIONAL POVERTY: "is defined as a lack of resources due to a particular event (i.e., a death, chronic illness, divorce, etc.)"²⁵ We also see this in our context with the local work done

²³ Robert Joseph Taylor, Christopher G. Ellison, Linda M. Chatters, Jeffrey S. Levin, and Karen D. Lincoln, *Mental Health Services in Faith Communities: The Role of Clergy in Black Churches*, Social Work, 2000, Vol. 45(1) p. 77.

²⁴ Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., Philip E. DeVol, Terie Dreussi Smith, "*BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, (United States, 2001), p. 49.

²⁵ Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., Philip E. DeVol, Terie Dreussi Smith, "*BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, (United States, 2001), p. 49.

by those employed within oil and gas production and distribution or with the closing of manufacturing facilities. The downward turn of the economy has impacted our context ministry area for the last fifty years, especially in the oil and gas production industry. The local economy's impact can happen with changing economic conditions around the world like the oil and gas crisis starting in 1973 or closing the Allen White Furniture Manufacturing company in 2007.

GENERATION Y: the generation of people born in the period from 1980 to the mid-1990s. This generation is known today as the millennials. Generation Y is the most educated people in America today, but most of this has come with technological inventions. In this study and program, these are the students' parents working with At-Risk children. According to Chris Folmsbee, in his book, *The Garden Resonates*, his studies have shown that "Millennials are the largest generation in the West. There are approximately eighty million Millennials in the U.S. alone. In March of 2016, Millennials, those ages 18–34 or those born between 1983–2000, surpassed baby boomers and became America's largest generation. Millennials are diverse too. Roughly 56% of the Millennials in the U.S. are white, and by the year 2020, minorities will be the majority in the U.S." ²⁶

Generation Z's definition is new to our list in part because it is the youngest of our society and those we are dealing with in the public schools as At-Risk children.

GENERATION Z: the generation of people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Generally, Generation Z members are tech-savvy, pragmatic, open-minded, individualistic, and socially

²⁶ Chris Folmsbee, *The Garden Resonates*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2017). p. 22. Kindle Edition.

responsible. Chris Folsmbee wrote that Generation Z is "the post-Millennials, the anti-Millennials, the i-Generation, Plurals, and even the Pivot Generation. They are more connected than any other generation, and they thrive on all things visual images and video-to not only entertain them but to educate them as well".²⁷

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN VOLUNTEERS FOR MENTORS WITHIN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES GUIDELINES

RECRUITMENT POLICY:

The Recruitment Policy should provide clear direction regarding the development, implementation, and review of a mentor recruitment plan. A recruitment plan is critical to obtaining volunteer mentors and instrumental to the success of the program. The Recruitment Policy should indicate how the recruitment plan will be implemented and handled. The Recruitment Policy will also outline the roles and responsibilities of staff and board in performing these activities. This policy serves to ensure that the effective recruitment of volunteer mentors is well-managed and consistent.

Essential Questions and Thoughts: What types of individuals are you targeting to be mentors? Are you looking for a specific gender, race, ethnicity, age, occupation, or background that meets your program? What are the recruitment goals of the program? Who, both on your staff, Church, and in the community, should be involved in developing the recruitment plan? I need to be sure implementing the policy is in conjunction with your program and timelines. I need to

²⁷ Chris Folsmbee, *The Garden Resonates*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2017). p. 23. Kindle Edition

know a reasonable timeframe for creating and updating the recruitment plan as your program continues? What resources are available to implement the recruitment plan? How will the plan's effectiveness be reviewed and measured?

INQUIRY POLICY:

The Inquiry Policy provides program staff with clear direction on how to handle inquiries from potential mentors. The Inquiry Policy also guides the mentees and their parents, including what initial information to offer them. The policy has two critical functions: ensuring the mentoring program staff provides excellent service to potential program participants. These policies help the program staff serve as a screening tool for those who wish to continue becoming a mentor within the program. At this stage of the program, there will be an overview of the program. The program will consist of critical requirements of participation. The program will also provide overview highlights of the screening procedure supplied and determined by the program director. This overview will occur if there is an initial interest in those having a part in the program. If interested, inquiring individuals are given an application packet. The individuals will then be invited to attend an orientation session (see the next section's inquiry procedure for more details).

Essential Questions and Thoughts: How are mentor and mentee inquiries processed in your program? What structures are needed to be in place to handle those interested in being a part of the program? Who handles inquiries for the program? Are they provided with specific training for handling inquiries? What is a reasonable response time to address questions for those wishing to be mentors? What should information about the program be given to prospective

individuals during their initial contact and interest in the program? Are program candidates required to attend an orientation session before going through the screening process?

ELIGIBILITY POLICY:

The Eligibility Policy defines the minimum and preferred criteria necessary for a candidate to become a mentor or mentee. Having precise eligibility requirements and a comprehensive set of standards that each candidate must meet for initial or continued participation helps your program. These eligibility standards help you operate more efficiently, ensure greater consistency and stability, better accomplish program goals, and reduce your program risk. In developing the Eligibility Policy, your program should carefully define what qualifying training, compliance, and procedures are necessary for mentors and mentees. The policy will ensure the safety of individuals and the success of your program. Additionally, the Eligibility Policy should indicate if there can be any extenuating circumstances in meeting the eligibility criteria.

Essential Questions and Thoughts: What types of mentors and mentees are you targeting for your program? Some questions might be based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, interests, or particular personal issues. What requirements should an individual meet to become a mentor or mentee? These requirements may include the individual committing to meet for a specific number of hours per month. A candidate agrees to sustain the relationship for a certain length of time. A mentor is consenting to and completing the screening process, attending orientation and training sessions, communicating regularly with the program coordinator. What factors would disqualify an individual from becoming a mentor or mentee from participation or continuance in the program?

SCREENING POLICY:

The Screening Policy is a fundamental part of risk management. The Screening Policies are a cornerstone to your program's success and the foundation of your screening procedure. A mentor screening policy establishes a requirement that all applicants must complete your established screening procedure before being approved for participation within the program. The plan provides precise requirements for program staff for how they must screen potential mentors and youth participants. As you develop your screening policy, you should research what screening procedures will be necessary to address liability issues specific to your program. This research is to ensure the safety and liability of individual participants. Your research should state what minimal steps are required in the respective mentor and mentee screening procedures. It should also stipulate which person(s) is to make the final decision about the acceptance of individuals into the program. If extenuating circumstances are offered regarding the eligibility requirements, it should guide any additional approvals required before accepting an applicant. Finally, the Screening Policy should also include guidance about what to tell applicants when a final decision has been made about their eligibility. It is imperative to have if the applicant has been rejected.

Essential Questions and Thoughts: What are the potential risks and liabilities associated with recruiting volunteers to work with youth? What are the minimal rules and policies your program staff must follow to ensure that prospective participants are adequately screened? How do you make sure all individuals taking part in the program know the policy and follow the formal screening procedures? Who makes the final decisions on what individuals can take part in as program participants? How are you handling circumstances that might need to be dealt with, if allowed at all? What information is given to rejected applicants regarding the reason for the rejection?

RECORD-KEEPING POLICY

The Record-Keeping Policy underlines who is responsible for keeping notes and observations of mentor and mentee applicants and describes the type of filing system necessary to maintain and update these records. A record-keeping policy is crucial because it provides clear direction to the coordinator on how to document and store files of the screening and matching process. A record-keeping plan helps reduce program liability by ensuring that all information is kept confidential and is treated consistently. A record-keeping policy helps increase program effectiveness by providing a system for efficiently maintaining each individual's records in the program and monitoring matches. The record-keeping plan should also include and give examples of how and when information is to be destroyed.

Essential Questions and Thoughts: Who is responsible for creating and maintaining program records? What types of information should be documented? Do you have specific forms for keeping records of program individuals and monitoring matches? Do you have instructions or rules in place for making sure that secure and confidential documents of active program participants are appropriately handled? Do you have a safe and privileged archival system for keeping records of past program participants? When and how do you destroy records? Are electronic data stored securely and backed up periodically? If so, by whom and how often?

MENTOR SCREENING PROCEDURES:

All potential individuals must attend the two-hour mentor training program presented by the program director. All possible individuals must complete a written application, along with a check on their driving record, and secure a copy of current insurance coverage. Check criminal history: state and federal, child abuse registry, and sexual offender registry. The program director

must perform the same checks on the applicant in all states resided in as an adult. The mentors must provide three personal references who are not family and will be verified.

A final decision to accept an individual into the program will be based on the program staff and program leader's final assessment. The program director's decision will be made following the completion of the mentor or mentee screening procedure and paperwork. The program director and staff have the final approval for interested individuals accepted into the program. There can be no reason for an individual to be provided applicants rejected from being a part of participating in the program. All individuals wanting to be a part of the program are expected to meet the eligibility outline set forth by the program director and leadership. However, any circumstances that may arise during the process can be reviewed at the program director's discretion and supervision. The applicants' acceptance may then be allowed with the program director's written approval and representative of the program leadership when all eligibility requirements are not met. These instances of not meeting specifications are expected to be rare. Documentation from prospective candidates must be maintained for each applicant and placed in confidential files.

TRAINING PROCEDURE

The Training Procedure is defined as what training is required for mentors and mentees. A training policy is essential because it stipulates what training is mandatory and a vital part of the mentoring relationship and the program's overall success. Without compulsory requirements for the mentor and mentee training, programs are at a higher risk of mentoring relationships that terminate early or fail, which can be detrimental to your mentees or mentors and your program's overall reputation.

The plan must cover basic program guidelines in this program: safety issues (including mandatory reporting and communication/relationship building skills. Both mentor and mentee will attend a two-hour training session at least twice per year. The program director will require training updates, and training sessions will be offered to each group at least quarterly.

Essential Questions and Thoughts: When in the application process should mentors/mentees receive training? The program director should determine how long the initial training should be for mentors and mentees. What will be the critical areas that must be covered in each mentor or mentee training session? The program director will need to determine if there will be follow-up training sessions offered for mentors or mentees. If so, will they be required, or do they have the option to take part? How often will they be provided? Who will have the responsibility to plan for and conduct the training sessions? How will the training be evaluated?

MATCHING PROCEDURE

A matching procedure gives clear direction on how to create a pairing and what constitutes an acceptable pairing within the program's framework. A matching process should promote each pairing's longevity by specifying the match criteria best utilized to make a successful relationship. It also lessens program risk by clearly stating which types of pairings are unacceptable.

The program director and leadership will follow the matching procedure guidelines before creating a Mentor-Mentee match. The program coordinator should use the factors described in the matching process to determine the suitability of a Mentor-Mentee pairing.

The program director and leadership will determine the suitability based on the following criteria: Preferences of the mentor, mentee, parent/guardian; similar gender and ethnicity if

available; and shared interests and similar life experiences. The pairing of mentors and mentees must be either male adult to male student or female adult to a female student.

Essential Questions and Thoughts: What information does your program coordinator need to determine a match? What criteria do you use in matching? Do you have a defined matching procedure? Are there any instances in which your program would not allow a pairing between a mentor and a youth, examples of these pairings might be, matching male mentors with female mentees? How do the steps in your pairing procedures help reduce the incidence of early instances of communication? What role do parents/guardians play in making or approving the pairing with the student and mentor?

CONFIDENTIALITY PROCEDURE

The Confidentiality Procedure will clearly state what information must be kept confidential. It must indicate who has access to sensitive information. It must also note how confidential information will be used for your program. Finally, it will be kept confidential and the limits of this type of protection of personal information. Federal and state laws govern who may have access to sensitive and private information, making a confidentiality policy an essential part of risk management. This policy is crucial because it defines the circumstances in which data can be released. It is necessary that all those working with your organization are aware of this policy and strictly adhere to it to protect the privacy and rights of all those involved. In drafting this policy, it is essential to consult with your board, advisory committee, and legal counsel to ensure that your plan fulfills the level of risk management desired within the program. Channels for the release of information should be included within your policy and procedure documents. They

may include: Information release forms, Image release clauses, or forms Legal subpoena or for purposes of litigation Mandatory reporting requirements.

Essential Questions and Thoughts: What records are confidential in the organization? Who has access to classified documents? How are documents filed properly and kept confidential? How do you handle individuals and program participants for violations of confidentiality? Where can you find and know Federal and State laws pertaining to privacy? Under what circumstances information be released to others?

MEETINGS WITH THE SCHOOL, MENTORS, AND STUDENTS TO EXPLAIN THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR UNDERSTANDING REPORTING, AND THE PROPER AUTHORITY WITHIN THE PROGRAM.

THIS MEETING IS EXAMPLE OF THE EXPLAINATION AND SIGNING OFF FOR THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURE OF THE MENTOR/MENTEE PROGRAM FOR AT-RISK CHILDREN.

Confidentiality Policy:

It is the policy of the **STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AND LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL MENTOR–MENTEE PROGRAM** to protect the confidentiality of its participants and their families. Except for the limitations listed below, program staff will only share information about mentors, mentees, and their families with the program director and the school administration. The Confidentiality Policy should inform all prospective mentors, mentees, and parents/guardians of the scope and limitations of confidentiality by the program director and leadership. Additionally, the mentors, program director, and Lafayette County Public Schools officials must keep information about mentees

and his/her families confidential. Stamps First United Methodist Church and Lafayette County Schools shall provide a responsible and professional service to mentors, mentees, parents/guardians. Stamps First United Methodist Church and Lafayette County Schools offer outside sources to report personal information about the prospective participants and anyone connected to them, including: 1. The information gained from mentors and mentees, written or otherwise, about themselves or their families, in application to and during program participation. 2. Participants' names and images gained from themselves, program meetings, training sessions, and other events. 3. The information gained about participants from outside sources, including confidential references, school staff, employer records, is considered the program director and leadership's property and not the mentors or mentees and are not available for mentors, mentees, or parents/guardians to be reviewed.

Limits of the Confidentiality Policy. Information concerning applications and observations from mentor and mentee records may be shared with individuals or organizations specified under the following conditions: 1. Information may be gathered about program individuals and shared with other mentors, individuals, or organizations only upon receipt of signed release permission from mentors, mentees, or parents/guardians. 2. Identifying information in which may include names, photographs, videos, etc., of program individuals to be used in program publications or promotional materials only upon the written consent of the mentor, mentee, and parent/guardian. 3. Information may solely be provided to law enforcement officials or the courts, according to a valid and enforceable subpoena. 4. The director will provide individuals' data to legal counsel in the event of litigation or potential litigation involving the program. Such information is considered legally privileged information, and its confidentiality is protected by law. 5. The program director, leadership, and mentors are mandatory reporters. They must disclose

information indicating that a mentor or mentee may be dangerous to individuals or intends to harm him/herself or others. 6. If the program director or Lafayette County Public Schools officials receive information at any point in the pairing process, a mentor or any administration person uses illegal substances. In that case, the mentee or parents can reject the pairing or exit the program. The program director or Lafayette County Public Schools officials identify that there is a criminal history of any individuals taking part in the program. In that case, the mentee, parents, or guardians can reject the mentor's pairing or be a part of the program. The program director of Lafayette County Public Schools official has information that a mentor or administrator within the program is inappropriately using alcohol or other illegal controlled substances. In that case, the director will share information concerning the inappropriate action with the parent or guardian. They will choose to reject the individual as a mentor or close the existing pairing and exit the program. 7. When the decision is made to pair a mentor or mentee is considered a complementary matching candidate, information is shared between the potential paired parties and the parents or guardians.

Mandatory Reporting of Neglect and Child Abuse Policy:

Mandatory reporting of neglect and child abuse policy gives your program what constitutes and defines child abuse and neglect mandates staff training in this area and provides instruction to staff on how to report a case of suspected child abuse and neglect. Developing a mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect policy is a vital part of program risk management. All 50 states within the United States have passed some form of mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting. It is critical for your program to understand the reporting requirements as defined by your local states. **Most Federal and State definitions and laws covering child abuse and neglect will protect what defines sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, emotional injury, elder**

abuse, mental injury, physical abuse, neglect, and abandonment. For more information, contact the Child Welfare Information Gateway at <http://www.childwelfare.gov/> or 1-800-394-3366. Adult individuals within this program are designated as mandatory reporters. These adult individuals have weekly contact with children. They may also contact healthcare workers, school personnel, day-care providers, social workers, law enforcement officers, and mental health professionals. Many states have clauses for "privileged communications" or exceptions to reporting. Program leaders and mentors must check their Federal and State laws and be knowledgeable of how to do mandatory reporting. Your State laws may or may not require Mandatory reporting by mentors. The program leader should always verify if reporting is required. If mandatory reporting is necessary, mentor reporting procedures within your program must be developed and adhered to. Your staff and program participants must be aware of what constitutes child abuse and neglect. The participants must receive training on child abuse and neglect. Participants must know what to do if such a case arises, including when it is not a recent occurrence. It is mandatory to consult with your legal counsel to ensure your policy is accurate and complete.

It is the policy of the **Stamps First United Methodist Church and Lafayette County Public School Mentor-Mentee Program** that the Director, leadership, mentors, and other representatives of the program must report any suspected child abuse and neglect of program mentees or program participants immediately. Any such suspected reports must be made to the program director and all appropriate state and local authorities. Program staff must follow the mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect procedure. All employees, volunteers, and mentors of the **Stamps First United Methodist Church and Lafayette County Public School Mentor-Mentee Program** are required to undergo mandatory training on what constitutes child

abuse and neglect within their current context. The trainees are to know what the state statutes are and how to report such cases accurately. The legal agency will investigate any staff, volunteers, or mentors accused of child abuse or neglect. The director will limit and restrict contact with youth in the program and from any person under investigation and the person in question. That individual will be suspended from the **Stamps First United Methodist Church and Lafayette County Public School Mentor-Mentee Program** participation per the program director's decision and the school administration until such investigation is concluded.

Unacceptable Behavior Policy:

An unacceptable behavior policy defines behaviors deemed inappropriate and unacceptable by mentors and mentees while participating in your program. It is an effective policy because it helps ensure the safety and security of your participants. This policy requires mentors and mentees to be on their best behavior. By doing this, you support acceptable practices that will help towards your program's success. Program participants must clearly understand this policy and that there are consequences for noncompliance with this policy.

It is the Stamps First United Methodist Church and Lafayette County Public School Mentor-Mentee Program's policy that unacceptable behaviors will not be tolerated. These intolerable behaviors, either coming from mentors or mentees while taking part during the program, will not be tolerated. This policy and rules in no way are intended to replace other policies or procedures, including, but not limited to, the following: 1. Confidentiality Policy 2. Mandatory Reporting of Neglect and Child Abuse Policy. Several behaviors are regarded as incompatible with **Stamps First United Methodist Church and Lafayette County Public School Mentor-Mentee Program** goals, values, and program standards. They, therefore, are considered unacceptable and

prohibited while participants are engaged in mentoring activities: 1. Unwelcome physical contact, such as inappropriate touching, pinching, close bodily contact, punching, and physical assault 2. Any physical, visual, verbal, or behavioral mannerisms or conduct denigrates, shows hostility, or aversion toward any individual 3. Degrading or exploitive behavior of either a sexual or nonsexual nature, including threats of such action 4. Display of demeaning, suggestive, or pornographic material 5. Knowledge of sexual abuse or neglect of a child 6. Any untruthful talk, public or private, of any mentee parent/guardian or family member 7. Criticizing, public or private, of political or religious institutions or their leaders 8. Unlawful action based on any local, state, or federal law 9. As stated above, any unacceptable behavior will result in a warning and disciplinary action, including suspension or termination from the mentoring program's participation. 10. No contact between the Mentor and Mentee or Parent or Guardian outside the limits of the set times at Lafayette County Public Schools grounds and Stamps First United Methodist Church (This contact cannot be made in verbal, text, email, phone, or any multi-media resources, or outside contact). Communication will be at the two authorized Lafayette County Public School Junior and Senior High and Stamps First United Methodist Church sites.

Having read all of the above conditions, a person should understand and will have agreed to the information as stated and explained to them. The director will also inform an individual that all releases of material, authorizations, and permission granted shall remain in effect during the program's timeframe. Those policies and rules to everyone in the program will continue to be in force unless revoked in writing by the undersigned program director, leadership, and public schools' administration.

Chapter 3:

Matthew 19:14-16 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁴” But Jesus said, Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven “¹⁵ And He laid *His* hands on them and departed from there.

OBSERVATION OF THE STUDENTS

We kicked off the Mentor/Mentee program on October 19th, 2018. We had all the students and mentors meet in the pre-set meeting room. According to the administration and counselors of the Lafayette County Public School System's request, the meeting was to get to know all those working with the students. This meeting was to get both the students and mentors acquainted

with the room they would meet at their agreed times during each week. The main observation that I made was the communication between the mentees and their adult mentors and how the future meetings between them might progress. Language and communication are the keys to success, which are crucial in any relationship building and learning. So this first meeting was so important in building that trust. We are looking for that connection that fosters a transfer of language that will bring forth understanding each other and allow no disconnects that could eventually lead to failure or misinterpretation. Communication between the groups can be difficult even though the mentors have grown up as Baby Boomers and Generation X dealing with those that are Generation Z. Problems can arise as Earl Creps wrote in his article, *Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them Similarly*. Creps wrote that "leaders feeling very culture-current often experience a blackout on certain subcultures of which they are unaware. As one pastor put it, 'Every day I get a little more disconnected unless I intentionally work at staying connected. We live in a plug-and-play world, which poses a problem for many of my peers, who are hard-wired. They need what only the next generation can give: connectedness'.²⁸ Easy opening questions included: who were the student's parents or guardians, what grade or favorite subject in school, and what do they plan to do once out of school. These are typical questions that show interest and concern for the students they might not have gotten at home or from family, friends, or neighbors. When these questions are asked positively and not condescending, though they seem natural in origin to most people as regular communication, they are the building blocks to trust and remain current to the students' lives.

²⁸ Earl Creps, *Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them*, (San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 2008). p. 21.

Observations for the first couple of meetings with the mentees and mentors were what most people would call breaking the ice meetings. My first thought would be that the girls would open up more than the boys and that the male mentors might have to work harder with them to build a relationship where learning and trust would take place and form those connections that provide growth and fellowship. I was wrong. From the first meeting, all but one of the boys opened up well to their mentors. From the boys' meetings, they talked a lot about sports and band and interests they had. The excitement most of the boys had was that of video games and electronic gadgets.

The girls' early meetings with their mentors went well. We did not have all in attendance for the first couple of sessions following the joint meeting with all the mentors and mentees. Some of the students were on school trips, while others were in ISS (In-School Suspension). One of the major problems addressed by the administration with the student population was deportment. Studies have shown that low grades in education and poor conduct propagate the cycle that keeps At-Risk children in that cycle and continues when they reach maturity. Only through disciplining one's life to bring about a sense of order can one achieve high virtues and prosperity. Reinhold Niebuhr wrote about this in his book, *THE IRONY OF American History*, when he said, "in Calvinist thought prosperity as a mark of divine favor is closely related to the idea that it must be sought as part of a godly discipline of life. 'There is no question,' declared Calvin, 'that riches should be the portion of the godly rather than the wicked, for godliness hath the promise in this life as well as the life to come.'²⁹ Niebuhr understood Calvin what was trying to say that you will find it hard in life if that life is one that is undisciplined and chaotic in nature. In terms

²⁹ Reinhold Niebuhr, *THE IRONY OF American History*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1952). p. 51.

of the Ozark mountains where I am from, we would call it, "you were just spinning your wheels in life and going nowhere fast." Discipline brings order, and order brings focus on how to achieve a means to an end. To have objectives and to set goals and sub-goals to overcome will help conquer the chaos that life can bring each day.

The girls, like the boys, did open up to their likes in school and the community. Most of them had a sense of structure while being a part of athletics. However, observation of their communication with their mentors led me to believe there was a lack of discipline in the home and, for most, a lack of a father figure or central patriarchal figure in their lives. This lack of a male role model or father figure has been growing within the African American community for more than the last fifty years in society. Most of these students come from a single parent or grandparent home life where male role models are not available or seen as an adverse effect from those male figures that come and go in their lives. Michael W. Waters observed in his book, *FREESTYLE: REFLECTIONS ON FAITH, FAMILY, JUSTICE, AND POP CULTURE*, that he had become "gravely concerned not only with the lack of a productive presence of men with our homes, churches, and schools but also with articles and reports now claiming-directly or indirectly-that the role of men is inconsequential, especially in the African American community. While I acknowledge that, generally speaking, African American men have been woefully absent, I must also acknowledge that their absence has resulted in far more bad than anyone could ever attempt to imagine as good".³⁰ This problem of not having a father figure became further evident in discussion with the mentors and mentees about their families, as most would need the father or patriarchal figure in their lives. I know it was my father and mother that

³⁰ Michael W. Waters, *FREESTYLE: REFLECTIONS ON FAITH, FAMILY, JUSTICE, AND POP CULTURE*, (Nashville, Fresh Air Books, 2014). p. 97.

brought about the thoughts of discipline and order in my family. That discipline has kept my brother and me on nearly a straight and healthy path of our journey in life. But what we see today in society and the lives of those at-risk children is a family structure built on a matriarchal family or a single mother or female household.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. saw a relationship between the worldliness view and emotionalism of society concerning their well-being in the African American community and church. The mentors asked the students how they felt about their daily lives and family, how the world sees them and their family, and how they think about it. Most of the time, it was a defense about how the family was and is in their lives and how they cannot be more than who they are now because of their current situations and the overall community where they live. Dr. King wrote that this thought pattern "resulted from a combination of factors- the frustration of the militant concern from equality in the fold religion, the response of the Negro to the emotionalism of the missionaries, the tendency to use religion as an escape valve from insufferable conditions, the failure to accept the Negro within the mainstream churches, to identify a few."³¹ This was the observation that I took from listening to those conversations with the mentors and mentees. The mentees' outlook of life in their current community was upsetting to them. Their setting in poverty and how religion played a role was one based on emotions of frustration and uncertainty about their future. Home, school, and the church was not a positive outlook for a better future because of those in their families and community circle who have not gotten out of poverty and made better lives for themselves. Dr. King observed in his communities and social groups that as education increased, the ability to better oneself became available to the African American

³¹ Michael Battle, *THE BLACK CHURCH IN AMERICA: African American Christian Spirituality*, (Malden Mass, Blackwell Publishing, 2006). p. 132.

communities. The more the African-American community seemed to use the church and its social networking, the more it began to make a difference in poverty's lives. Dr. King stated that "religion is always a means to an end, always functional in the context of the situation. So that when the socio-economic situation changed for some Negroes, when they found life worth living through gaining responsible economic positions and diversion in social life, it follows that, like all other disinherited groups, they gradually began to orient their religious life to their new-found selfhood".³²

This thought of selfhood is essential in the development of a young person's life. As a former teacher and coach, I watched as those students and athletes grew in their self-awareness of who they were and what they were becoming as young adults within their social and educational experience. I found that with positive influence and a focus on goal setting, the students saw themselves as being able to accomplish their objectives and learn even from their failures to overcome life and problems down the road. Once the students got free of the worldly view of what others had said negatively about them, they were able to break free to grow and learn. Those negative words and actions also came from their families and became negative in their development as an active part of the social structure. A positive outlook instilled in them that they could do more than they had ever dreamed as their outlook on their future was bright. Dr. King would state that this is important, especially in the African American community, because "the de-emphasis of the 'otherworldly' points to the Negro considers himself a real person, a typical American."³³ These positive thoughts as a person of value are at the core of the

³² Michael Battle, *THE BLACK CHURCH IN AMERICA: African American Christian Spirituality*, (Malden Mass, Blackwell Publishing, 2006). p. 132.

³³ Michael Battle, *THE BLACK CHURCH IN AMERICA: African American Christian Spirituality*, (Malden Mass, Blackwell Publishing, 2006). p. 132.

program's work. One of our main goals within the Mentor/Mentee program is to get the students to have socially acceptable lives with others in the community. Understanding one's worth can provide opportunities to make those connections with people who will stand behind them and help them along life's way. Through faith and perseverance, the students are empowered with the Holy Spirit to overcome all that life puts in their path. The empowerment comes from knowing that God is on their side.

The students witnessed that the mentors were people who had gone through similar trials in life. And yet, the mentors had not been consumed by them. This realization about what the mentors had overcome and, as social structure and society rules were concerned, became successful. I observed that most of the students had individuals in their lives and socio-economic backgrounds who operated in the world rather than God's Spirit. From these individuals, they learned what only the world had to offer. Paul wrote to the Galatians that to overcome, a person should "live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God". (NRSV) As I observed most of the students and listened about their home life, many witnessed and had seen within their families and community life of fleshly desires. Thus, they had not observed or participated in making connections with those who could make positive changes in their lives.

Adults who exemplify a real-life journey became inspiring to the mentees. Until the students were paired with these adults who were productive parts of the community, they saw what difference positive thinking could have in their lives. These examples, mixed with faith that demonstrated to the students it all works for the betterment of themselves and others.

The students saw how the Holy Spirit gives every one of us a will and way to move through this journey of life. In Galatians chapter 5, Paul wrote about the fruit of the Spirit and life, that "²²by contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another". (NRSV). In the observations of the students, they found that those mentors who overcame their life situations had to understand God's Holy Spirit to operate within the context of life. What if they acted out in the flesh or worldly view, they would have become bogged down in the muck and mud that only the world has for those who can see no way out. Observing the students realized that what they had been told or saw within their socio-economic structure was not based on hope and faith, but one based on depression and fear. The students demonstrated that a fear of failing and a lack of confidence were due to the things of the world that had let them down. Through their relationship with the mentors, they learned that they could learn from their failures and become all God created them to be.

OBSERVATION OF THE MENTORS

In the opening meeting, I observed the mentors being full of joy and nervous about meeting their mentees for the first time. The pleasure seemed to help those and see the interest the students had in the mentors' lives. What I observed in this first interaction is a common thread with the

mentee's and mentor's life experiences as well as cultural and social experiences. These observations bring to light the mission of this program: to help those in need. We get this idea from the life that Jesus Christ demonstrated by meeting those in their time of need and lifting them from depression and despair to the life of the journey in God's Kingdom full of Hope and Grace. I saw the mentors starting to share their life stories with those at-risk children of how they overcame and have built a life full of achievement and joy. We know the mission is the transmission of life experience from the mentors into the mentees' lives. What we observed is the evangelization of the Christian way of life. That, in turn, transferred the Christian Life into the community in which they live and are a part. The transference of the Christian Life gives us the idea that the mission is not just spoken but lived in the lives of those that call themselves Christians. Dr. Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi wrote in his book *Mission: An Essential Guide* that transmission can be a mission as an evangelism tool. He states that "mission as evangelization continues to be an important task in the life of Christian communities. Evangelization is the process by which the Gospel is communicated, understood, lived, and integrated into the life of a community. Evangelization, consequently, is not only about proclamation, but it is also about discipleship: living the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ by growing, maturing, and witnessing in and to the Gospel of Christ".³⁴ Relationships built with excellent communication and understanding bring light to God's movements in our journey through life. We observe those trying to help us usually have been where you are now. These life examples demonstrate how God's action in our lives helps us become all we can be. Understanding mixed with faith, we conclude God can always help and will always be there in your time of need.

³⁴ Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi, *Mission: An Essential Guide*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2002). Loc 1264 (Kindle).

In the following weeks, I noticed the mentors were becoming more relaxed with their assigned students. With all relationships, a person is more prone to be nervous and not as open at communicating with others. This thought comes from the unknown of how a person is perceived, either by an individual or group, into which they are trying to be a part. Today, most adults have a hard time communicating with Generation Z. Generation Z has grown up in a social structure today, mainly controlled by technology and social media. One-on-one communication is not the norm for these young people, unlike the mentors in the program. The mentors had to create something new within themselves that opened the door for communication. "In an interview, Anastasia Goodstein, a leading youth expert, describes the process as one of creating "space" (teen, space, gamer space) for new forms of expression and ways of living. The inception of social networking sites such as Facebook illustrates how these spaces evolve".³⁵

This new form of communication through technology and mass media is unique to Baby Boomers and even Generation X. This was one problem the mentors had in dealing with Generation Z members who have grown up using technology and mass media outlets. To bring this into perspective, we need to know how Generation Z looks at the world. Chris Folmsbee wrote in his book *The Garden Resonates* that through research conducted by business and advertisement agencies looking into the future of what motivates Generation Z in their thoughts and future buying of goods and services stated seven things of how Generation Z see the world:

1. Generation Z hates the idea of perfection. In the hearts and minds of this generational mindset, reality wins over perfection every time. This generation insists that people were born to be real, not perfect.

³⁵ Earl Creps, *Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them*, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 2008). p.22

2. Generation Z is not afraid to earn their way. While this generation is least likely to live for the "American Dream," it does have ambitions to be in the top 1%. This generation is ready, willing, and able to earn whatever it is they are awarded.

3. Generation Z cares about the world, especially human rights. As our world becomes more and more diverse, Gen Z becomes more and more committed to human rights. If the environment was the primary social concern among Millennials, the rights of people are the primary concern with Gen Z.

4. Generation Z demands evidence to back up claims. Gen Z, not unlike the others who have come before it, has a "practice what you preach" mentality. We all hate hypocrisy. Yet, we are all hypocrites. Funny how that works. Because of their passion for human rights, Gen Z believes that brands should take a stand on issues, and when brands do, Gen Z supports the brand.

5. Generation Z is strategic when it comes to their social media participation. You can understand why a generation so ambitious and intentional about their aspirations would use their social media platforms with purpose.

6. Generation Z values inclusiveness and the freedom to evolve with their personal identity. One of the most challenging aspects of reaching and engaging Gen Z is our understanding of identity formation. Gen Z doesn't possess an "I found my identity" frame of mind. Instead, for Gen Z, their identity formation, many believe, is not about a one-time revelation but a curated composition.

7. Generation Z believes the way toward social stability is in the extremes. As we watch Gen Z mature, I believe, as so many others do, that Gen Z will move toward making the world a better place through choosing to identify in the extreme areas of life. The research indicates that

personal behaviors will become more conservative and overall societal values more liberal.

Along with that, traditional values will become customary as radical issues become more rigid and drastic. Gen Z lives in the extremes and believes that it is in the extremes that walls can be broken down and a better world can be created.³⁶

During the meetings with the mentees, I watched as the students tried to control the conversations at times and go off-topic on random subjects of personal, school, or in some cases, with the boys, video games. Being a former teacher and coach, I wanted to step in, but I had to let the mentors handle the situation and bring the students back on task and focus. In my former profession of education, military, and sports, I have found that if a person in authority loses that role because of inaction or someone stepping in to bring back a sense of order, the person in charge is not respected by those under them. Earl Creps wrote in his book, *Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them*, that this loss of authority can bring in thoughts of indecisiveness. This indecisiveness can make them more defensive in their communication and response action and bring about feelings of despair and power loss. Creps states that "freedom from defensiveness and despair involves many things, but none more important than reframing relevance-not just as theological or pragmatic tool but as a kind of style that leaders adjust over time by capitalizing on the relative nature of the concept itself. In other words, even when bereft of power over my situation, I still hold the power to make choices about how I act in that situation. These choices offer an opening for greater

³⁶Chris Folmsbee, *The Garden Resonates*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2017), Kindle Edition, p.24-26.

fruitfulness in the future for leaders who find the grace to say out loud, "I am not relevant," or "I am not as relevant as someone else could be," as an invitation to reverse mentoring."³⁷

If a mentor is not careful, they can also get into a position of what is referred to in leadership as positional blindness. Positional blindness happens from their role within the group and how others are perceived within their role. Creps states that "positional blindness, then, may sound like an organizational issue (which it becomes), but the condition develops and is sustained one decision at a time. Position obscures our vision because leadership roles, by definition, tend to be isolating, eroding such assets as time and relationship while substituting temptations such as pride and reoccupation. Both disconnect us from a constantly morphing world. According to the influential researcher and consultant Don Tapscott, one of the challenges presented by that world is that "for the first time in history, kids are more important to innovation than their parents." The impact of this reality is felt everywhere in our society, but perhaps most acutely in popular culture and technology, two forces that are becoming increasingly intertwined".³⁸

After the meeting, I had a conversation with the mentors on what they thought about the students' focus and conversations other than their learning time. They agreed it was hard to keep them on track, like most young children and teens do from time to time, but you had to "walk them back" to the center of focus. The mentees' lack of attention is due in part to today's change in communication and how young people view and interpret communication coming from others.

³⁷ Earl Creps, *Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them*, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass a Wiley Imprint, 2008). p.42

³⁸ Earl Creps, *Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them*, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass a Wiley Imprint, 2008). p.52-53

Creps wrote that "to a listener today stuffed with hundreds of e-mails, thousands of texts, and millions of images, another talk can seem like a cup of water thrown into an ocean." "Speaking in the context of marketing, Patrick Dixon, Europe's leading futurist, observes a parallel: "We will not reach this new citizen through traditional means of communication. Consider the filters we have in place to ignore the marketing information we do not want, and then consider the filtering power of a 21-year-old in 2012."³⁹

These thoughts of miscommunication bring in the views of disciplining oneself so that one can maintain focus on the objective to learn and grow. With all the problems we have with bullying and teen violence, I have observed that when discipline is active and seen, one's self-worth and learning occur. One must particularly learn to discipline one's self during the journey of life. From self-discipline, we find a more ordered and safer zone is established where social and educational learning can take place.

OBSERVATION OF THE FACULTY AND STAFF

One of the most important things I have learned as a former teacher, coach, and now a Pastor is when dealing with government agencies, social groups, and schools is to ask two essential questions, "What do you need?" and "How can we help with that need?" These are the first questions I asked the Lafayette County Public School Administration when I came to this appointment as Senior Pastor at Stamps First United Methodist Church. I learned that the administration had never been asked those questions in the past. They did not know how to respond to unexpected issues coming from a religious leader of the community. I noticed that

³⁹ Earl Creps, *Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them*, (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass a Wiley Imprint, 2008). p.109.

they had hope in their eyes because someone wanted to help their schools, and those students become all that God and society expect them to be. But at the same time, you could see in their eyes and language a guard that would come up from the ideas of a church working with a public school and any repercussion that might come from parents or people in the community that holds to the views of separation between church and state. Some people believe that churches will get a foothold within the school system to get students and teachers saved for Jesus Christ. They will take time away from a student's learning time to have Bible time. When I was a student growing up in Ozark Public Schools in Arkansas, we said the Pledge of Allegiance, had Bible reading, and ended with a prayer each morning during the school year. As a teacher and coach, the whole school would say the Pledge of Allegiance. But what had happened since I was a student in the Ozark Public School system was that the scripture reading had already been removed from the daily schedule of events. Not long after, the prayer was also taken out. It has become a problem within our public schools that they do not wish to upset the public or those opposed to religion, so they will take out those parts of everyday school activities to avoid legal battles. But the courts have upheld that religion and the school have a role to play with each other. In James Wood's editorial, he wrote that "the truth is that the Court repeatedly went out of its way in its decisions, beginning with the *McCullum* case (1948), to make explicit that its rulings were not born of a hostility to religion or that they should be perceived as favoring the establishment of a "religion of secularism." Neither the study of the Bible nor the study of religion, when made the object of academic inquiry and "resented objectively," the Court declared, conflicts with its decisions or the First Amendment. Instead, the Court maintained, devotional Bible reading and prayer recitation "are religious exercises, required by the States in

violation of the command of the First Amendment that the Government maintain strict neutrality, neither aiding nor opposing religion."⁴⁰

The thought of religion and Government working together is not a new idea in our society and public education. We have seen this in the early part of American history during the time of the "Great Awakening" periods. The First Great Awakening in America was led by prominent religious leaders like George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards during the 1730s through the 1740s. The Second Great Awakening period was from the 1840s to the early 1900s. The Great Awakening movement's goal was to bring forth an idea of the profoundly personal religious experience within an individual. The spiritual understanding of the individual would then form a sense of personal conviction and redemption from sin. Thus, the individual will begin to develop a personal relationship with God and Jesus Christ that establishes a new personal morality and change of one's life. The Great Awakening would cause people to look at their lives in a new light. The new outlook would be one where the Gospel and a unique sense of morality are needed to be at the forefront of even the nation's political life. Justo L. Gonzalez wrote in his text, *THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY: The Early Church to the Present Day*, that the "Great Awakening had political consequences. This was the first movement that embraced the thirteen colonies that would eventually become the United States. Thanks to it, a sense of commonality began developing among the various colonies. At the same time, new ideas were circulating

⁴⁰ James E. Wood, JR., EDITORIAL Equal Access: A New Direction in American Public Education. *A Journal of Church and State*, Winter 1985, Vol. 27, p. 6.

regarding human rights and the nature of government. Those ideas, joined to the growing sense of commonality among the colonies, would produce momentous events".⁴¹

This same idea of Christianity and religious thought getting into public schools and public life is just as prevalent today as it was during those periods. Clarke E. Cochran calls this reluctance or hesitation to allow a church or Christian organization into government or public education a feeling of incursion on their space of influence within society and personal development.

Cochran states that "the emotional style of individual salvation spills onto the public stage, disrupting its elaborate rituals of accommodation and toleration. As in the period of the Great Awakening, intensely personal, the private religious experience begins to have profound public consequences. Border guards standing watch over the line between public and private raise the alarm as much because of the potential for such consequences as because of any actual incursion".⁴² In this thought, when you meet with those in leadership within government, social groups, and public education, you must come in with non-threatening language as you are not trying to take away the authority or routine of their everyday operation or schedule. It would help if you came with the language of wanting to help them as a form of partnership and connection that will fill them with a sense of authority and growth. You must have the faith to allow the Holy Spirit to work and move in the building of relationships and connections within the environment you are trying to create for those in need so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be shown in action and truth. For those that think this is taking away from the Word being

⁴¹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *THE STORY OF CHIRITANITY: The Early Church to the Present Day*, (Peabody, MA, Prince Press, 2004), p. 230.

⁴² Clarke E. Cochran, "Public/Private-Secular/Sacred: A context for Understanding the Church-State Debate", *Journal of Church and State* vol. 29 1987. p.116.

preached, this is not so. You are now acting in faith. An individual is letting God, who is already there, move in their situation without hindrance. A person's hindrances might form from political thought or religious concerns within those of authority. David Walsh writes that "the problem of the church in the modern world is that the price of public effectiveness seems to be the abandonment of the transcendent moral authority that alone justifies the church's claim to social and political influence. For the world is not irrevocably closed to the question of ultimate meaning, nor does the church exist apart from its mission to realize the Kingdom of God in the present. Christianity and modernity become continuous, indeed intimately linked, in the recognition of the need in a contemporary secular civilization that can only be answered by the redemptive divine presence manifested within the church".⁴³

As time went on with most of the teachers and administration, I saw a more relaxed view of our presence within the school during our time of mentoring and relationship building as they realized we were not a threat to their authority or control. They also saw within those participating students over time better deportment and better grades within their classes. During this time, the mentors learned who each of the teachers and administrators was. They began to develop a working and social relationship. They both worked on helping each student in the program. As progression was made, they got to have moral victories from the positive outcome of the student's increased work performance, social skills, and betterment in deportment. The administration and teachers also received positive feedback. The positive feedback came from the parents or guardians about the changes that were taking place in their child. Those students

⁴³ David Walsh, *The Role of the Church in the Modern World*, *Journal of Church and State* vol. 29 1987 p. 66.

that were failing in class had a positive turnaround once they identified their objectives for classwork and set goals and sub-goals to accomplish. Fellow students even provided positive feedback as they saw an increase in a positive response to their fellow students' betterment.

Not all of my observations were positive in this project. We did have one administration official that did not want this project in the school. The School Board did vote unanimously to allow the project to go forth. This vote to allow the Mentor/Mentee program did pay off for them. And with the conclusion of the project, the School Board and administration were pleased with the students' achievements. The School Board and administration were also delighted with the mentors from the community's leadership.

I also noticed some of the faculty saw this as an inconvenience to their regular daily routine as we had to call the students out three minutes early to get their lunches so we could meet during their lunchtime. We also had problems meeting with those students during the basketball season due to extra practice requirements during tournament time and setting up the gym for those tournaments. Just as the students were learning how to deal with life situations that arrived from time to time, I and the mentors adjusted to these challenges as we met during the school year.

OBSERVATION OF THE CHURCH MEMBERS

During my observations of my church and its membership, I have gained additional perspective and knowledge on how I need to look at this from an inward observer/participant rather than an outsider in the project. The inward observer's attitude and understanding were what I needed to show the church and help find a possible theological means within the program that better fits the area of at-risk students and how the church can help. In my observations of the church and its

members, we have found new ways to engage the topic of At-Risk students with mentors, school teachers and administration, and the community and how we look at Scriptures dealing with children's poverty. I saw through teaching the church members and informing them on these students' lives allows them to look not only within the church's members but also in the greater community's lives. The education of the members is done by engaging the experience of the church in this project. The training that I did was done through sermons, teachings, and examples. The experience of the church involved interaction with those students in need of help. Cooperation brings an understanding of how to set and obtain objectives and goals. The instruction brings thoughts of how to function in the community to understand social rules and life skills. From Scripture, we learn that Jesus did not just come to die for our sins but also show us how to live. In John's Gospel, the 14th chapter verse 6, we read that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Understanding how one's life can go and how to work through problems in life can lead to a person's reality and reason while establishing one's existence and future in the journey of life. Chris Folmsbee, in his book *Gladhearted Disciples*, wrote that "our identities develop within the community organization and the community's essence, which engages the heart and soul; we should avoid identity development in isolation or loneliness."⁴⁴ We cannot walk this journey alone, which is at the Eternal Heart of Church, and its role in social relationships and connection.

In my observation, I developed criteria to help them understand our research within my congregation, teachers, and outside the community. They consisted of a broad range of diverse ages, gender, race, and social/economic levels of people within our congregation. The criteria

⁴⁴ Chris Folmsbee, *Gladhearted Disciples* (Kindle Locations 587-589). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

will ensure that I have equal voices on all sides of the project and, in development within the project, a sense of participation where the entire congregation is a part of the project and can grow together through it. The feeling of involvement is accomplished by keeping the leadership informed each month at board meetings, sermons, and small group meetings that focused on the children in our community. Examples of this participation by the church are demonstrated time and again from the Bible. As Chris Folsmbee wrote in his text, "the small groups, or communities, are designed to help people become deeply committed Christians. These communities are then "sent" out into everyday life—jobs, schools, neighborhoods, and so on—to live a missional life where their daily contact and interaction with non-religious and nominally religious people make public God's presence. This is, in part, our evangelism strategy—to inspire, challenge, encourage and equip our small groups to live into their various villages, towns, and cities to represent Jesus. We work hard to ensure our groups have the organization needed to launch (outlook on life, common interests, vision, goals, etc.) and the essence of the true community (story, meaning, personal and communal needs met, etc.) to thrive".⁴⁵

During the church and small group meetings, I thought about dealing with young people and their parents today and understanding how they see the world. The student's thoughts of their world can hinder communication if that world thought is negative. These opposing views of one's world can stop a person, social group, or community of faith from reaching out to others and not forming those bands of communications that bring forth relationship building and connection. The church and mentor's main concern was how we communicate with those

⁴⁵ Chris Folsmbee, *Gladhearted Disciples* (Kindle Locations 592-596). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

younger than them. Studies referred to earlier about Generation Z about children and teenagers today, their outlook on life, and how they see themselves in it. To help understand the students' social and family environment, we have to examine those from Generation Y or the millennial generation. Generation Y are the parents or guardians of these students within the program. Recent financial and future studies on millennials show seven common core values and behaviors they have in making their decisions on life issues, purchases, and involvement in volunteering for social activities. Chris Folmsbee writes in his book *The Garden Resonates* that the seven millennial core values and behaviors for millennials are:

1. Millennials pursue valuable experiences. A recent study determined that 72% of millennials would rather spend their money on experiences than on material things.
2. Millennials want the world to be a better place and are willing to adjust their life to make it so. Seventy-four percent of millennial leaders think they can make a difference in the world. In fact, 32% of millennials said they are very optimistic about their future, and 40% said they believe they can make a global difference.
3. Millennials are interested in a successful career, but not how previous generations have defined success. There are six key areas that young adults use to measure success: (1) work-life balance, (2) job satisfaction, (3) salary, (4) achievement of personal goals, (5) achievement at work, and (6) development of new skills. You'll notice that the top two areas, even above salary, are finding jobs that first and foremost provide a work-life balance and provide satisfaction.
4. Millennials are optimistic and consistently look for the possibility before the impossibility. Despite high debt loads, rising global poverty, rising unemployment, less personal income, and

so forth, millennials are quite possibly the most optimistic generation ever (until we look into the Gen Z stats).

5. Millennials flourish in diverse relationships and environments. Millennials are the most ethnically and racially diverse group of young adults the US has ever seen. A study done nearly a decade ago revealed that approximately 19% are Hispanic, 14% are black, nearly 5% are Asian, just over 3% are a mixed-race, and roughly 60% are white.²⁵

6. Millennials expect all parts of their life to be anytime and anywhere. Edwin Hubble changed the way we understood the cosmos forever. His law, aptly named Hubble's law, points to a growing universe and helped us to see that we live in an ever-expanding universe.

7. Millennials have a digital worldview. This does not simply mean that millennials are always on the Internet with their phones in their hands. The fact that millennials have a digital worldview means that their entire lives are impacted by a digital platform. For example, banking, shopping, exercise, sex, music, work, and so forth all happen by simply reaching into their pocket and taking action.⁴⁶

These seven core values and behaviors help those in our church and leadership understand and compare Generation Y's and Z's outlook of life to their own. The church members consist of those from the Greatest Generation, those in their late 80's and 90's. The silent generation, those in their early 80's and mid 70's. Those known as the baby boomers, those in their early 70's through the late '50s. And those of Generation X, those in their mid-50's to early '40s. I observed this vast difference in ages and life experiences at first fear and hesitation within the

⁴⁶ Chris Folmsbee, *The Garden Resonates* (p. 19-22). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

church members to work with the students and their parents. We learn from Scripture that anxiety can cause doubt and even a lack of faith to see God's divine plan in the course of our journey through creation. We see this even with the fear and doubt in Abraham and God's promise to give him a line of descendants that would carry on his name and bloodline.

In the book of Genesis 15:1-6 New International Version (NIV), we read, "After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." ² But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children, so a servant in my household will be my heir." ⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your flesh and blood will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed, you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

In his article and sermon, Craig A. Satterlee stated that "some theologians have posited that every one of the world's great disappointments and sins stems from the font of fear. Fear, it seems, informs so many of the evils that wander unhindered through a world that wishes, so it appears that it could be rid of "fear" as a concept. Fear governs a great many of our actions, stemming from an instinctual need to protect oneself from danger. This "instinct" to fear, which is part of who we are as human beings, is built into the very fabric of our nature." ⁴⁷ Fear can be a counter-productive view that can hinder the progress of learning, developing relationships, and making one's faith in God. During our weekly outreach and small group meetings within the

⁴⁷ Craig A. Satterlee, *Currents in Theology and Mission*, June, 2010, Vol.37(3), p.256(17)

church, I noticed those fears and anxieties seemed to diminish as time passed, and they learned about each other and their views on the world in which they live and move in each day through their journeys were revealed. Satterlee states that "our readings today opens with God speaking to Abram, saying clearly that he is "not to fear," a task that is easier said than done, given the human instinct to be wary of difference, and most especially wary of not knowing what is coming next. Throughout their exchange, it is clear that what Abram is afraid of is the possibility of having no descendants, a prospect that seems to increase with each passing day as he increases in age. Abram shares the view of the ancient world that without offspring, there is no future, no ability to control even remotely "what comes next." While some might like to focus on Abram's reproductive ability, preachers and teachers must not get bogged down in this. What Abram is afraid of is an uncertain and undefined future".⁴⁸

Observations with my church members have given me a way to focus on the process's practical part. I have to be the pastor first, then engage with the group. I must help in battling the fears and bring in instruction and Scripture that can help in facing said concerns and anxiety that those members might have. Such teaching might bring them to a closer relationship with the community and with God. I have to teach them to let go of their past. We then focused on how to teach them to let the Holy Spirit direct them. We did this by their journey of life through prayer, daily walk, and communication with those of Generations Y and Z. Finally; I noticed when I brought the small groups and church together our Sunday morning worship times, which gave space for new thought to each generation represented. Each theory of understanding might include sermons with specific themes on poverty, social differences, as well as the behaviors and

⁴⁸ Craig A Satterlee, *Currents in Theology and Mission*, June, 2010, Vol.37(3), p.256(17)

beliefs of those of Generations Y and Z. These sermons will allow for the whole, giving room for the different themes from the various voices from those within the observations gathered through the research. Most importantly, I observed this allowed the Holy Spirit to work in me, the mentors, and church members to become better observers/participants in the lives of others. Another observation came within the research so that the glory of God can be focused on and about our Divine Creator, and God's work can be done within all these lives and future lives within this project without fear and bring about a stronger faith.

CHAPTER 4:

Ephesians 2:8-10 New International Version (NIV)

⁸For it is by grace, you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

CONCLUSION OF MENTOR/MENTEE PROGRAM

Reviewing my observations and the program's overall outcome, I would have to say that it was a success in our objective to help at-risk students. We observed a building of relationships and connections between the mentors and mentees, church, and those working in Lafayette County Public Schools brought forth an average increase of 6 to 10-points in their grades and better deportment within the school outside in the community. The overall project connected my research by allowing me to know the need for building relationships within a mission setting outside the church with the community. It has also shown me how to make those relationships within the Lafayette County Public Schools employees and the church members and community volunteers to help in the Mentor/Mentee Program working with At-Risk students within Junior-Senior. High School. The project connected me with research to help understand Generations Y and Z, which helped me develop an excellent program and ministry to assist in the learning and decision-making processes for both mentor and mentee. The project has helped me identify those at-risk students who are most in need of help by working with those teachers and counselors who see the students the most. For nine months out of the year, from the time school

starts in the morning to let out in the late afternoon, those who work in the school system have the best advantage of seeing those students' needs and have a day-to-day relationship with them.

The project allowed us to bring forth the teachings with the mentor/mentee's middle-class rules in society, both known and unknown. Most of these students did not know that there were rules by which we interact with each other in the workplace and everyday activities that are adhered to by the greater social and economic community. Understanding these rules allows those who have only known the unknown rules of their communities and families in poverty to operate and become accepted into those of the middle and upper classes. This relationship of society is similar to the Civil Rights Movement of the 50s and 60s. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. started within the African American community in the 50s and 60s, where one could overcome where they have come from to seek a better life for themselves and their families by working within the rules of social structures and how to navigate through them by civil means and discourse. Dr. King wrote, "the dream is one of equality or opportunity, privilege, and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few; a dream of a land where men do not argue that the color of a man's skin determines the content of his character; a dream of a place where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of all human personality, and men will dare to live together as brothers... Whenever it is fulfilled, we will emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man into the bright and glowing daybreak of freedom and justice for all of God's children".⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Michael Battle, *THE BLACK CHURCH IN AMERICA: African American Christian Spirituality*, (Malden, MA, BLACKWELL PUBLISHING, 2006), p. 133-134.

This critical understanding that we are all God's children regardless of our race, social or economic means, and gender, should make us all want to work together. We should work to find a common goal; in which everyone has the opportunity to become all God has created us to be and help those most at-risk, the most vulnerable in our society. In the book *BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, the authors state that teaching society's hidden rules can significantly benefit an individual help them to achieve their goals. They say that "learning a second set of cultural rules increases an individual's chances for survival and advancement. Immigrants and travelers have a choice between learning the rules of the second culture and becoming self-reliant in the new setting... and not learning the rules, and relying on others to assist them (if they will). People in poverty culture have the same choice. Learning the rules of the middle class does not mean that the values or philosophies of the middle class have been adopted, but it does mean that the individuals can be more successful where they are".⁵⁰

We also had great success in helping the mentees understand the difference between generational poverty and seasonal poverty. Distinguishing these two types of poverty, generational, and seasonal helped them identify what they were. This identification helps them break out of the cycle that all of their families have been a part of for generations. The mentors helped to focus on the problems that have led to their families' situations that have kept them in poverty. The mentors did this by having a given structure to the project. This structure is what Wickman and Sjodin have termed the "Laws of Mentoring." Law of Mentoring helps the mentors and mentees

⁵⁰ Ruby K. Payne, PhD., Philip E. DeVol, Terie Dreussi Smith, *BRIDGES out of POVERTY: STRATEGIES for PROFESSIONALS and COMMUNITIES*, (United States, aha Process Inc., 2001), p. 116.

to maintain a positive environment, developing character, limited responsibility, shared mistakes and successes, planned objectives, direction, mutual protection, communication, and extended commitment.

As stated earlier, my family was impoverished during my early childhood. Being in poverty was not because of being unemployed. Both my parents had jobs, but because they both had college educations (and in my father's case, military experience), jobs in the area in which we lived paid at low-income levels. Just about everyone where I lived was poor, so there was no comparison to the upper-middle-class or elite upper class to base comparison with our livelihood and socio-economic structure. My upbringing is similar to what we observed here in the Lafayette County, Arkansas area — that most, if not all, of the students in poverty, are not aware of their situation or have anything else except in mass media to compare it.

We even see this in the Scriptures in Amos and Luke's Gospel, where a class structure is there, but in the Spiritual aspect of life and eternal wealth and poverty can be seen in different lights. From Amos chapter 6 verses 1 and 4-7, we read, "Woe to you *who are* at ease in Zion, and trust in Mount Samaria, Notable persons in the chief nation, To whom the house of Israel comes!" "Who lie on beds of ivory, Stretch out on your couches, Eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall; ⁵ Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, *And* invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; ⁶ Who drink wine from bowls, *And* anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. ⁷ Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, and those who recline at banquets shall be removed". (NKJV)

This warning in Amos shows us that even when there are visible notations and distinctions between wealth and poverty, God shows us that in the Eternal and Spiritual matters, those who seem to have the most can lose all they have. In contrast, those that have the least can gain more from life through faith and a relationship with God. In the New Testament, we also see a similar idea of what wealth and poverty can do in the Spiritual aspect, where one's faith can bring about change in one's Eternal journey and end. In Luke's Gospel, we see Jesus telling the disciples parables about life and life's journey. When Jesus told the story about the rich man and Lazarus in Luke chapter 16, verses 19-31, we begin to understand the Spiritual aspects of wealth and poverty. The Scripture tells us that Jesus told his disciples ¹⁹ "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and ^[a]lived sumptuously every day. ²⁰ But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ desiring to be fed with ^[b]the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.

²⁴ "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you, there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us. "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the

prophets; let them hear them.’³⁰ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’³¹ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’” (NKJV) This parable teaches us that every person can be brought to enlightenment about our condition or situation that we might be a part of. If we listen to what we are taught, we may overcome the uncertainty of our futures. Craig A. Satterlee wrote in his article *Preaching Helps* that “together Amos and Luke tell us that the answer as to where we’ll be sitting is to be found in wealth. Wealth and poverty are two states, two sets of conditions, two sides of the table. The people on each side of the table are set apart and opposed to each other. They sit on different sides of a table that is canyon-like. At death—in the end—the table remains, but the sides are reversed. The relationship is not changed but turned around. Lazarus and the company get the best seats. (Amos 6:1 and 4-7 and Luke 16:19-31)”.⁵¹ In the Mentor/Mentee program, we see new hope in each one of the students that they can move past poverty. Observations show through faith, hard work, and building goals and relationships, and they can achieve that status of the middle class. The students can set goals to become upper-class citizens. Thus forever breaking those chains of generational poverty that have inflicted their families and communities.

Looking at the mentors and what they got from their program experience showed growth in their ability to communicate with Generation Z members and with others around them in the educational field. This communication helped the mentors understand the day-to-day interaction the teacher and administration have with these students. They entered the Program not sure of themselves and their abilities as mentors to others. Still, they had a heart for children in need, and

⁵¹ Craig A. Satterlee, *Preaching Helps, Currents in Theology and Mission*, 37.3 (June 2010), p. 256.

they let their faith and determination to grow and become something greater take over as a beacon of light to those students.

This experience was similar to a mentor program in the Windy Hill Elementary School in Jacksonville, Florida. The principal of Windy Hill Elementary was looking for help for her student that were at-risk children. In the article, Principal Sanders stated that “in the heart of a neighborhood where many families struggle because of a sluggish economy, Windy Hill Elementary School is a haven for its students. ‘I have no control over the economy, the Legislature or the budget,’ Principal Sharon Sanders said last week, ‘but I can control what happens to these children here.’ Windy Hill has excelled, getting its first "A" grade from the state, despite long odds against it. Most of the school's students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Hot meals and warm clothes have been luxuries for more than a few. The number of children who don't speak English as their first language has doubled each of the four years Sanders has been the principal.”⁵² Like Windy Hill Elementary, the student’s grades and deportment were among the primary goals that the mentors worked on to improve their self-esteem and achieve their objectives to become what they wanted for their futures within society.

The desire to help those in need is at the very heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus always went back to the greatest commands he could leave with us in the Gospels. We find these out of the Gospel of Matthew the 22nd chapter reads, “³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵ and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷ He said to him, ““You shall

⁵² Teresa Stepzinski, Windy Hill school volunteers, community partners key to A grade, Florida Times-Union (Jacksonville, FL) 2011.

love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Jesus wanted us to understand that if we are to love others and God, we must come to know how to love ourselves. One of the best observations was in the communication between the mentors and mentees, where the adults taught and showed the students how to love themselves. The love for oneself can occur while they were in the social/home life and economic poverty. Respect for oneself could happen as they faced problems on a day-to-day basis. Self-worth would help them advance their lives until they could come out of their current status and achieve their goals. Knowing oneself and where you stand concerning others is key to finding those positives which will help you grow.

We again see this from work done in the mentor program at Windy Hills Elementary. The article said that the school's “mentor and tutor students, established a school food pantry to help families get back on their feet after the loss of a job or health emergencies and provided school supplies through things like book bags and clothing drives.’ ‘Their partners also have put hammer to nail and renovated the school's cafeteria and computer lab and most recently built a beach-themed tutoring room, using materials donated by Lowe's. Much has changed in the neighborhood since ‘Windy Hill was built in the 1950s in a neighborhood not far from where Beach Boulevard and Southside Boulevard meet. Many of the school's parents work multiple jobs just to make ends meet, while others scramble to replace a job lost to the economy. Some students live with grandparents or members of their extended families because of circumstances beyond their control. ‘The economy and circumstances are challenging for families here. But the families are working hard to do what's right for their children,’ Sanders said. Reaching out to

students and their families is crucial to learning at Windy Hill as teachers, textbooks, pencils, and paper. ‘We’re saying, tell us if you need help. A child can’t learn if they are hungry ... or worried because a parent has lost their job or might have to move. Tell us, because we’re focused on finding solutions,’ Sanders said”.⁵³

The mentors of our Program were focused on the student’s well-being also. The mentors, like those in the Windy Hill program, not only talked to the students and encouraged them, but they made sure that the needs of the students are met. The mentors enabled the students by providing food and, if needed, supplies for the students to not have any hindrance in learning and building those relationships. We see this example in the Scriptures in James chapter 2, where James tells those he is writing to that faith without works is dead, and no life can come from it when human needs are not met. “¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters,^[e] if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead”.

(NRSV)

When a person does not know if basic human needs will be met (i.e., food and supplies), then learning might not occur, and both physical and spiritual growth may not happen. The thought and action again hit the key Scripture that I have used in this project that we should do is let our actions demonstrate Christ, not just our words. 1 John 3: 16-18 “¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our

⁵³ Teresa Stepzinski, Windy Hill school volunteers, community partners key to A grade, Florida Times-Union (Jacksonville, FL) 2011.

brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” (NIV). Truth in learning, as in all things, comes not just from our words but, most importantly, from our day-to-day actions in relationship with one another.

The presentation of our faith, according to the Bible, was vital in the learning process. What I observed was that it took place between the mentors and the mentees. When I sought in talented people as mentors who had a similar life experience as the students, I observed that this action was at the forefront of allowing shared life experiences. The shared life experiences allowed the mentors to break down walls and let communication happen. We see this in the case study with the mentors’ and community leaders’ involvement in the Desert Public Schools in Phoenix, Arizona. In the Credit Union Magazine article, we see the Desert Schools Federal Credit Union getting involved in the community and helping its growth and future well-being. The article states that “a successful community focus starts from the top. Desert Schools counts community development as one of its four core values, which ensures consistent and enthusiastic support at all organization levels. ‘What we call our 'Big 4' values include member solutions, employee engagement, financial strength, and community involvement,’ Graham says. ‘The four legs of the table keep us well-balanced, and community involvement is just as important as our other core values.’

‘Our senior executives have some of the highest number of volunteer hours and the highest levels of participation in our efforts,” she adds. "It's not unusual to be standing next to our CEO

packing shipments to be sent overseas to troops." ⁵⁴ Desert School Credit Union's goal was to build a community brand in which the community could help develop youth and others to bring about goals and core values beneficial to all.

The one problem is when those goals might run up against either your moral or social norms of the culture you deal with daily. These moral or cultural norms situations were what some of the mentors faced when meeting with students. The students' norms were rarely that of the middle-class rules and social norms in the United States' greater society. Their models fit with those of Stamps or Lafayette County's cultural criteria as a whole.

The social norm problems are a similar problem felt by those ladies at St. Marks Church in New Orleans in their fight for social justice and to help those in need. In the ministry of the deaconess of St. Marks, we see that when those social issues came to a head with the Spiritual nature of their call, they had to make the hard choice of what was best for all. "Attributing the decisions of the heroines of St. Mark's to their belief that their actions answered a call of God on their lives may seem suspect to some, but other, equally sufficient answers for their behavior are lacking. The religious forces and the cultural forces that acted on the women of St. Marks were sometimes congruent but often at odds. When the influences pulled in different directions, MECS deaconesses and the early WP & HMS leaders in New Orleans made choices that reflected not their cultural backgrounds but rather their willingness to answer what they saw as a

⁵⁴ BUILDING A COMMUNITY BRAND, Ted Goldwyn, Credit Union Magazine; Madison Vol. 82 Issue 6: p. 24-28.

divine call to pursue justice”.⁵⁵ I observed this same thing in my observations of the mentors when social problems seemed to get in the way of the Divine. In my view, I witnessed the answer to the Divine Call rather than them caving to the pressures of social norms found in the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in their interactions with the students.

A POSSIBLE FUTURE LOOK

The project did more to fulfill my expectations of how I had previously envisioned continuing my ministry in the missional field and how it is to be done appropriately by working with the community leadership and the church. The project fulfilled my expectations of narrowing down my overall focus on helping at-risk students. The narrowing down of the program helped better form the questions for my research to develop a more precise focus on a pinpoint solution that could have broader impacts in the future than my previous approach to the mission. I believe the program allowed me to give better instruction and clarification in what we needed to do in and through our research, learning from others, and our narratives.

The mentorship program enhanced my ability to do research better by connecting with those in public schools, community leadership, and others in authority, working with adult-student interactions, and how to find research material. The Program brought me in touch with other ministers, ministries, and research/marketing companies. These individuals know of and have done surveys and research on Generations Y and Z. The study helped me understand the parents' and children's beliefs, values, and future actions in the Y and Z generations. The program helped

⁵⁵ Ellen Blue, *ST. MARK'S AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL: Methodist Women and Civil Rights in New Orleans, 1895-1965*, (Knoxville, THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE PRESS, 2014), p.241.

as well of how to relate with them to help focus on changes that will lead to them getting out of poverty and developing their lives and families to move toward common middle-class goals and social responsibility.

I believe I gained new insights into my ministry practice by observing and learning from others, so I was not just an observer but also a participant within the Program. By learning from others and during my observations, I needed to ask specific questions. Questions like what was going on with those that were learning. Or for those that were helping as mentors within that process and what they learned. David Morgan wrote in his chapter in the text *BETWEEN SACRED AND PROFANE: Researching Religion and Popular Culture*, “The consideration of reception is often what it takes to get scholars outside of their own heads, to throw themselves kicking and screaming in the minds and bodies of others. And we need to ask what role the distribution or transmission of cultural artifacts plays in shaping experience. Popular culture is not a message-bullet fired by its producer. But the only way we will understand why is by finding out what it does for people and how they came to use it. So, we need to scrutinize artifacts; we need to focus on practices rather than only on objects, genres, practices, and audiences”.⁵⁶ We should always be willing to step out of the confines of our own understanding and become good listeners and communicators of knowledge from others to help us move forward in the Divine purpose of our mission to help those in need.

New insights into my ministry and research came by understanding how Generations Y and Z see the world in which they are a part through marketing and research studies. Also, insights

⁵⁶ David Morgan, *BETWEEN SACRED AND PROFANE: Researching Religion and Popular Culture*, (New York, L.B. Tauris & Co LTD, 2007), p. 28-29.

into how Generation Y and Z's beliefs differ from those from the Greatest Generation through Generation X. Generations Y and Z know the value of these beliefs as a part of their thinking and actions. Generation Y sees their lives are focused on shared experiences, the common good, re-defined success, optimism, diversity, constant connectivity, and living in a digital world view. While Generation Z (teens today) sees that perfection is over-rated, they will do whatever is needed to get a job done or complete a task. Human rights, accountability, social media activity, evolving identity, and extreme inclusiveness dominate their thoughts and actions within their worldview.

This process helped me refine my questions about the needs of those at-risk students. Also, what are the tools that make an excellent program? The reason for a unique program is to help the mentors facilitate better teaching and learning opportunities. The process helped to assist in giving the students a new and better outlook on life. It would provide the students with vision and goals for the essence of the real community. The process brought forth meaning and seeing that their personal and communal needs are met so they can thrive in this world. Knowing this allowed me and the adult mentors and those in my church to re-define how we approach those of Generations Y and Z with our faith in the Gospel and the theologies each of us holds due to our experiences and traditions. Tom Beauboin wrote in his chapter, *BETWEEN SACRED AND PROFANE: Researching Religion and Popular Culture*, "Christian theology has its own duty to divest itself, through interrogation of its own history and practices, of—in principle—all claims to a historicity, first, and to uniqueness, second. The study of Christian spirituality, as exercise, should begin with a genealogical divestment for the sake of understanding what we have done,

are doing, and might do to ourselves and others because of our exercises”.⁵⁷ Through our own lens, we try to work with others without seeing the world as they see it.

Yes, in this Program, we had diverse ethnicities and gender in both the adults and students. The adults and students come from similar social and economic backgrounds, but the problems arise when we, as adults, try to look at things from our past and deal with matters along life’s journey. That is when, if you are not careful, you have a breakdown in communication and learning because people tend to tune others out when they lose focus and think that their opinions do not matter within the conversation.

The mentorship program helped shape and influence my research to help those in the Program and others by creating an environment for learning. Others draw forth a narrative within my writing to build and continue mentor programs that meet their specific community and social needs. This narrative was done by identifying and pinpointing the problem in the context of my ministry. That problem was defined as At-Risk students within extreme poverty and the needs they have to learn to make better decisions in life, set goals and objectives, and maintain focus when the “mountains or obstacles” of life get in their way. One of the main things that we focused on and modified in my research was understanding others' core values. In this project's case, it was Generation Z's core values and beliefs and their behaviors related to the mentors. Through the project and observation, I learned that Generation Z’s core values are they hate the idea of perfection. Also, Generation Z is not afraid to earn their way in life. They also care about the world (especially human rights). Generation Z demands evidence to back up claims from others. They are strategic

⁵⁷ Tom Beauboin, *BETWEEN SACRED AND PROFANE: Researching Religion and Popular Culture*, (New York, L.B. Tauris & Co LTD, 2007), p.107.

when it comes to their social media participation and value inclusiveness. Generation Z holds high regard for the freedom to evolve with their identity and believes the way toward social stability is in the extremes.

These core values and behaviors differ from those of my Generation or Gen X and some of the Baby Boomer Generation mentors. Understanding these differences of values helped in the communication and relationship building within the project and within the community and churches by bringing about a better understanding of what each group believes.

Finally, we did have an audience that took an interest in At-Risk children's problems and provided support, aid, and encouragement to those in the Program. I know there is an audience within the community of Lafayette County, Arkansas, the city of Stamps, and within Stamps First United Methodist Church that is interested in helping children, especially those in At-Risk situations around this country and world. I hope by faith that through my research, I have been able to help guide other programs to develop strategies within their context to get both children and adults out of poverty and live a life God had created them to have, one of blessings and peace.

The future I see within the Stamps First United Methodist members and the community will always see the need for outreach missions to at-risk children. We can do this by bringing about an awareness of their situation and helping them overcome the obstacles of life and their current socio-economic environment. As United Methodists, we have a history of this movement by its founder John Wesley. Wesley was concerned that the monarchy and the church that was under it needed to be changed. He later found that society needed help to change due to the lack of concern and help from those in power.

IN HIS ARTICLE, Leon O. Hynson wrote *Human Liberty as Divine Right: A Study in the Political Maturation of John Wesley*, *Journal of Church and State*. “These liberal positions, describing a more complex Wesley than the usual stereotypes permit, are evident in the fifteen political tracts, written between 1767 and 1782, and in other occasional writings. These works contain the perceptions of the mature Wesley. The fruit of Wesley’s political reflection led him away from a primary focus on divine right, passive obedience, and nonresistance to a primary concern for man's liberties, which may best be safeguarded, he thought, when a limited monarchy is recognized and respected. Wesley moved from a primary theological concern for the authority and rights of the monarch, who acts autonomously and is answerable only to God, to a primary practical, and ethical concern for the rights of persons, a concern grounded in natural law. This change is sometimes subtle, but it is real.”⁵⁸

Wesley had to take a new approach to bring forth the problems within society during the 1700s. In England, Wesley saw that the government and church authorities were unwilling to help or change to bring about social justice and education for those in poverty. Wesley understood that each person has the right to become all God had created them to be, and sometimes that needed a little help from others. Michael Sosins would take this a step further concerning agencies in his article, *The varieties of faith-related agencies*, that today “The faith-related definition has two other intellectual rationales. First, it is inclusive. It reflects the variable nature of ties, recognizing that agencies most closely aligned with faith must act in the secular world.

⁵⁸ Leon O. Hynson: *Human Liberty as Divine Right: A Study in the Political Maturation of John Wesley*, *Journal of Church and State* vol. 25(2) p. 60.

In contrast, agencies with a strongly secular orientation might be influenced to some degree by their religious ties. Second, the definition is analytically clear because it distinguishes the association to faith from the actions that may result from this tie. For example, an agency most closely aligned with religion may not necessarily fully attain religiously engendered goals. Large agencies that are loosely bound to a given denomination authority might reach a broader range of clients. This outreach by these agencies might more fully express specific service goals of that faith”.⁵⁹ So, we must always look for partners in the mission that have aligned themselves with goals that can help us reach a broader range of people to bring forth justice and create a learning process where faith in God can grow and bear fruit. Sosin also states that agencies such as government or social groups and organizations get involved in projects sometimes without a plan or stated purpose, and that can leave them not wanting to help in the future. He writes, “the earliest writings of the new institutional school submit that the organizational culture can be a taken-for-granted representation of the environment. Organizations draw assumptions, sometimes without thinking, and sometimes, because their leaders are aware, they are expected to do so (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and DiMaggio 1990). Viewed in this way, “culture” fits our perspective because it is derived from religious or secular institutions—institutions with which agencies are hierarchically arranged, or institutions that are important collaterals, such as other providers that have secular and religious ties, or professional associations. The analysis of culture seems to threaten the distinction between religion as an institution and religion as an individual practice, but it does not if we focus only on the culture that derives from these ties. A

⁵⁹ Michael Sosin, The varieties of faith-related agencies. *Public Administration Review*, Nov-Dec 2001, Vol.61 (6), p. 653.

major contribution of institutional theory is to suggest the importance of this type of cultural transmission”.⁶⁰ This contribution of institutional theory, in turn, can cause an agency to be reluctant to help in future missional outreach and support. Institutional theory is not new in our culture and history of the Christian Church and Western governments. We have seen this before in the late 1800s and throughout the 1900s. It occurred when government and church authorities pulled back on their support of missional outreach and expansion to help those in need. Justo L. Gonzalez, one of the foremost Christian History authors, wrote in his text *THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY: The Early Church to the Present Day*, “But in the nineteenth century, most western governments had little or no official relations with the missionary enterprise. For years, the British East India Company tried to bar missionaries from the lands under its rule. Most European governments, and the United States, adopted a neutral-and sometimes slightly hostile-stance towards missionaries and their goals. Few governments-and few churches -contributed funds to the enterprise. Lacking church civil and ecclesiastical support, those interested in missions had to appeal to the public at large, and hence the growth and proliferation of missionary societies”.⁶¹ So, in the future of this missional program, we must always work together. We can do that by making sure all involved are informed of every aspect of the Program. It is done by identifying the objectives and outcomes for all affected in the process. In the future, we must look to other resources for help and support just in case those we have

⁶⁰ Michael Sosin, The varieties of faith-related agencies. *Public Administration Review*, Nov-Dec 2001, Vol.61 (6), p. 655.

⁶¹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY: The Early Church to the Present Day*, (Massachusetts, Prince Press, 2004), p. 307-308.

reached out to in the past do not come through. Like the mentors told the students and I told the adults, always have a plan B, C, and D as a backup.

PERSONAL THOUGHTS

When I look at how this Program has gone for this school year, I am glad there are some thoughts about how things would turn out that I had not expected as a former teacher and educator. Finally, the At-Risk children's problem is critical to me within our outreach in mission ministry within Stamps First United Methodist Church for our community and children around the country and world. In my opinion, these At-Risk children are the most vulnerable human beings within our communities, and it is up to us to give them the chance to learn and make the right decisions to better their lives and futures. The Program has helped us to understand terms and conditions that shape and influence these children in their daily lives by allowing us to identify critical Underterms (relationship mission, Generations Y and Z, mentorship program, at-risk students, middle-class rules (known and unknown) within society, generational and seasonal poverty).

From these critical terms, we have expanded them, and it helped us formulate the questions of “What” and “How” to the project research and writing. Understanding these words will continue to help build relationships within the community and help those children become active and productive members of society. The most important thing I learned from this experience is who I am as a pastor and teacher. What I learned from the adults, school, community, and church is that there is a bright future if we are willing to work together and let faith overcome fear and know that God is there before we get there in missional ministry. And from the students, they

have a heart that wants what is right, fair, and just for all, but they need love and instruction by the experience of life in a positive way to make their goals and objectives come forth.

When answering where God is in all of this, we must say that God is everywhere, for everyone, and it is up to us to show God to the world. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once looked back on his life to see if what he had done in the social justice movement for African Americans was right. It was said that “King drew upon traditional African American religious ideas, particularly the notion of God acting in human history. Alluding to a verse in Psalm 23 and to a familiar hymn, he affirmed faith in the God ‘who walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death, and causes us to fear no evil,’ and in the God ‘who has been our help in ages past, and our hope for years to come and our shelter in the time of storm, and our eternal home.’ He concluded with a rousing affirmation of God as an integral part of his life. ‘As a young man with most of my life ahead of me, I decided early to give my life to something eternal and absolute. Not to these little gods that are here today and gone tomorrow. But to God, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.’”⁶² Yes, we can become. But we need to help each other get there so that even though we are here one day and gone tomorrow, we make a difference for the Kingdom of God every day that makes us eternal.

⁶² Michael Battle, *THE BLACK CHURCH IN AMERICA: African American Christian Spirituality*, (Malden, MA, BLACKWELL PUBLISHING, 2006), p.154.

PROGRAM FORMS

**MENTOR-MENTEE PROGRAM CONDUCTED BY STAMPS FIRST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH AND LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE AND PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Please Print Legibly:

Participant Information

Full Name of Child/Participant (First/Middle Last)

Date of Birth _____ / _____ / _____ Gender _____ Age _____

Home Address

City _____ State _____

ZIP _____

Grade in School _____

Home Phone #: () _____ Alternate Phone #: () _____

Health Issues/Allergies/Activity Restrictions/Medications

Required Emergency Medical Information

Health Insurance () Yes () No Company _____

Policy # _____

Primary Insured

Family Physician _____

Office Phone # _____

Parent Information

Name of Parent(s) /Legal Guardian:

Address (if other than Participant)

City _____ State _____

ZIP _____

Home Phone # () _____ Alternate Phone # () _____

Email Address

**MENTOR-MENTEE PROGRAM CONDUCTED BY STAMPS FIRST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH AND LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE AND PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

**PERMISSION FOR PARTICIPATION IN CAMPUS EVENT ACTIVITIES, RELEASE
OF LIABILITY**

I, the undersigned, certify that I am the student's parent or legal guardian mentioned above. This permission consent authorizes my student named above to attend and participate in the Campus Event Activity, MENTOR/MENTEE PROGRAM CONDUCTED BY STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH and the **LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**, including off-campus at STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH for which I have

registered him/her. I understand that my student child must obey all established rules and follow the person's instructions in charge of the Program. I consent to and understand that the person in charge of the Mentor/Mentee Program or authorized individuals has the right to dismiss my child, who is, in their opinion, a hazard to the safety and well-being of others.

By signing this parental consent and liability form, I expressly warrant that my child named above can withstand both the physical and mental demands associated with any **MENTOR-MENTEE PROGRAM CONDUCTED BY STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AND LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS** for which she/he is registered. I also expressly assume all risks to my child's participation in this **MENTOR/MENTEE PROGRAM**, whether such risks are known or unknown to me during the Program. In recognition of these risks and realities, and in consideration of my child being offered the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the **MENTOR/MENTEE PROGRAM**, I agree on behalf of myself and my child to release, waive, and disclaim any liabilities of or claims against, STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH and the LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, its administration, school and church board members, faculty, employees, and all private persons or organizations Volunteering services. I understand there will be without charge to transport, supervise, or chaperone my child while participating in such Campus/Stamps First United Methodist Church Mentor/Mentee Event Activities including, but not limited to any or all liabilities or claims for personal injury, property damage, court costs, attorneys' fees, and interest, however, caused or accrued, as a result of my child participating in the STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH and the LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS - sponsored event.

MEDIA RELEASE I, as a result of this, give STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, Rev. John J. Noggle, and LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS and their legal representatives and assigns the right and permission to photograph, digitally record, videotape, or audiotape my child named above while she/he is attending participating in any **MENTOR/MENTEE PROGRAM** Events occurring on LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL campus and STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. I further agree that any or all of the material record may be used, in any form, in publications, including electronic publications, or audio-visual presentations, promotional literature, advertising, or in other similar ways, and that such use shall be without payment of fees, royalties, individual credit, or further compensation. I understand that all such recordings, in whatever medium, shall remain the property of Rev. John J. Noggle, STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, and LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION / CONSENT FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT OF A MINOR I recognize that there may be occasions where the student named above may require first aid or emergency medical or dental treatment as a result of an accident, illness, or other health condition or injury. Therefore, I authorize any LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL officials, Staff of the STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, or Adult Volunteer, in whose care the student has been charged, to consent to any X-ray, examination, anesthetic, medical, surgical, or dental diagnosis or treatment, and hospital care, to be rendered to the minor under the provisions of the Medical Practice Act by the medical staff of a licensed hospital, whether such diagnosis or treatment is provided at the office of said physician or said hospital. In so doing, I agree to pay all fees and costs arising from this action to obtain medical treatment.

As a parent or legal guardian of my minor child (individual stated above), I am responsible for my underaged minor child's health care decisions. I am authorized to consent to any services to be rendered. As a result of this, I represent that my consent to an agreement to pay for dental, medical, or hospital care or treatment to be provided to my minor child is legally sufficient and that no permission from any other person is required.

By signing below, I authorize any LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL official, STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST staff, or Adult Volunteer, in whose care the minor child has been entrusted to permit any hospital, doctor/physician, or other health care provider to bill the minor child's insurance company or companies for the payment of any services rendered. I agree to assume all responsibility for such care charges as provided to those named earlier underaged minors.

I authorize any hospital, physician, or health care provider to release information to the insurance company named below concerning the underaged child's medical records. The release of such information is in connection with the completion of any insurance claim form.

I have read, understood, and agreed to all the information above. All releases, authorizations, and permission granted above shall remain in effect unless revoked in writing by the undersigned to STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, Rev. John J. Noggle, and LAFAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

_____ / _____ / _____

Signature of the Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

Mentor Assessment Summary

Name: _____

Eligibility Criteria

Does the individual meet each of the eligibility criteria? Please check the appropriate box.

Yes, No

Is the individual 21 years of age or older

Does the individual reside in Lafayette County Public School District

Is the individual willing to adhere to program policies and procedures?

The applicant agrees to a one-year commitment.

Commits to eight hours per month.

The applicant agrees to weekly contact with the mentee within boundaries established by Program.

The applicant completed the screening procedure.

Agrees to attend required training sessions.

Is the individual willing to communicate regularly with the program coordinator and submit monthly meeting and activity information?

The applicant has reliable transportation.

The applicant has a current driver's license, insurance, and driving record.

The individual has a clean criminal history.

The applicant has never been accused, arrested, charged, or convicted of child sexual abuse.

Recommendation: Recommendation to Approve:

Yes

No Reasons Why:

Approval: Approved:

Yes

No By: _____

THE STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AND LAFAYETTE COUNTY

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MENTOR/MENTEE PROGRAM

Information Release

I, _____, understand it will be necessary for STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH to have oversight to a background check. The background check will be regarding my driving record, criminal history, personal references, and employment.

I authorize STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH to obtain any information regarding my driving record, criminal history, character references, and employment. The data can be obtained from any state or federal agency, employer, and personal references to participate in a mentoring program. Further, I provide permission for STAMPS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH to conduct investigations of my background in any states in which I have resided and listed.

Further, I understand that information I have provided about myself will be anonymously shared with a prospective mentee and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s). I understand this action is to help in determining a suitable match in the program. Once a mentor/mentee pairing is resolved, my identity or other information may be shared with the mentee and parent/guardian to ensure and aid in facilitating a safe and successful match relationship.

Signature Date Full Name

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip _____

Date of Birth: ____/____/____

Social Security Number: _____/_____/_____

Current Driver's License No.: _____ State: _____

Please list any other places of residency other than stated above during the past 10 years.

City, State From (m/year) To (m/year)

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